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**A REVIEW OF
UNITED STATES MILITARY
COUNTERINSURGENCY
ACTIVITIES WITH SELECTED
MINORITY GROUPS IN
SOUTH VIETNAM (U)**

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**A REVIEW OF UNITED STATES
MILITARY COUNTERINSURGENCY
ACTIVITIES WITH SELECTED
MINORITY GROUPS IN
SOUTH VIET-NAM (U)**

**Some Policy and
Doctrinal Considerations**

**by
Donald S. Bloch
with the collaboration of
Marshall Andrews**

May 1967

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ABSTRACT

(U) The study reviews U.S. military counterinsurgency activity, primarily U.S. Army Special Forces activity, with four minority groups in South Vietnam: the Montagnard and Cambodian ethnic groups, and the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious minorities. Pertinent activities and identifications of the minority groups are presented historically through December 1965. U.S. military policies toward and relationships with the four minority groups, as an integral part of the counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam, are reviewed.

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FOREWORD (U)

(C) The Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program has been operational in South Vietnam since the beginning of 1962. The program is conceived as an integrated effort, involving military and civil actions, designed to gain the support and willing cooperation of indigenous population groups for the internal development and defense efforts of the Government of South Vietnam. As such, it must be considered an essential element in any national pacification effort.

(C) One unique aspect of the CIDG program is that a major effort has been directed toward ethnic and religious minority groups in the rural areas of South Vietnam; especially the Montagnard and Cambodian ethnic groups, and the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious groups. The execution of the CIDG program among minority groups, and the U.S. Army involvement, raise some questions concerning the relationship of host government, foreign (in this case U.S.) advisors and the minority group concerned. This three-way relationship and the attendant potential problems will obtain regardless of which element of the U.S. Army is given the responsibility for advising on programs designed to gain the support of minority groups for the host government. Therefore, it is expected that information about the experience in South Vietnam will be useful for setting up guidelines elsewhere.

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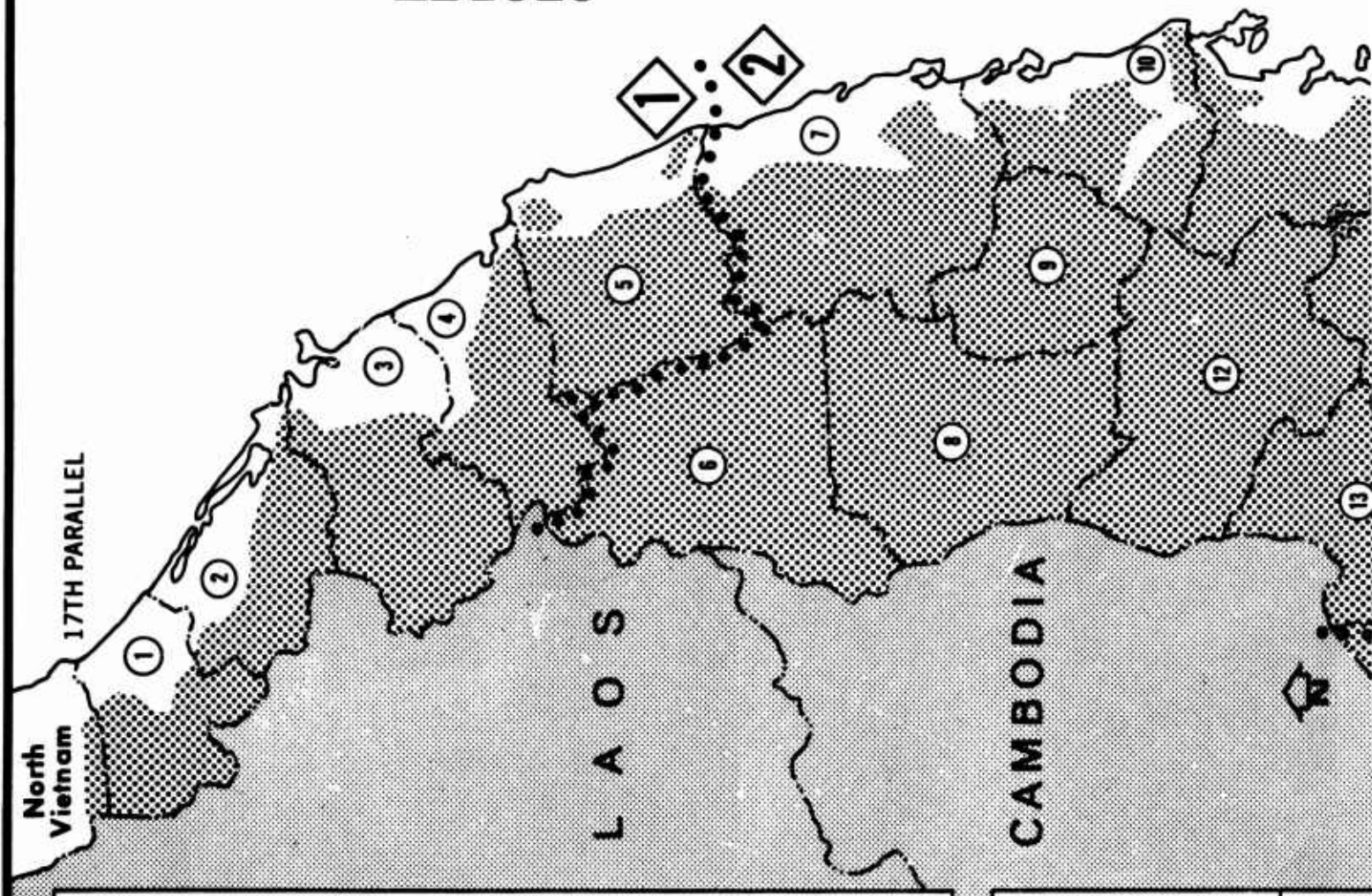
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|----|-------------|----|--------------|
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| 2 | THUA THIEN | 24 | BINH DUONG |
| 3 | QUANG NAM | 25 | BINH LONG |
| 4 | QUANG TIN | 26 | TAY NINH |
| 5 | QUANG NGAI | 27 | HAU NGHIA |
| 6 | KONTUM | 28 | GIA DINH |
| 7 | BINH DINH | 29 | LONG AN |
| 8 | PLEIKU | 30 | GO CONG |
| 9 | PHU BON | 31 | DINH TUONG |
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International Boundary

Province Boundary

Republic of Vietnam

Corps Tactical Zone Boundary

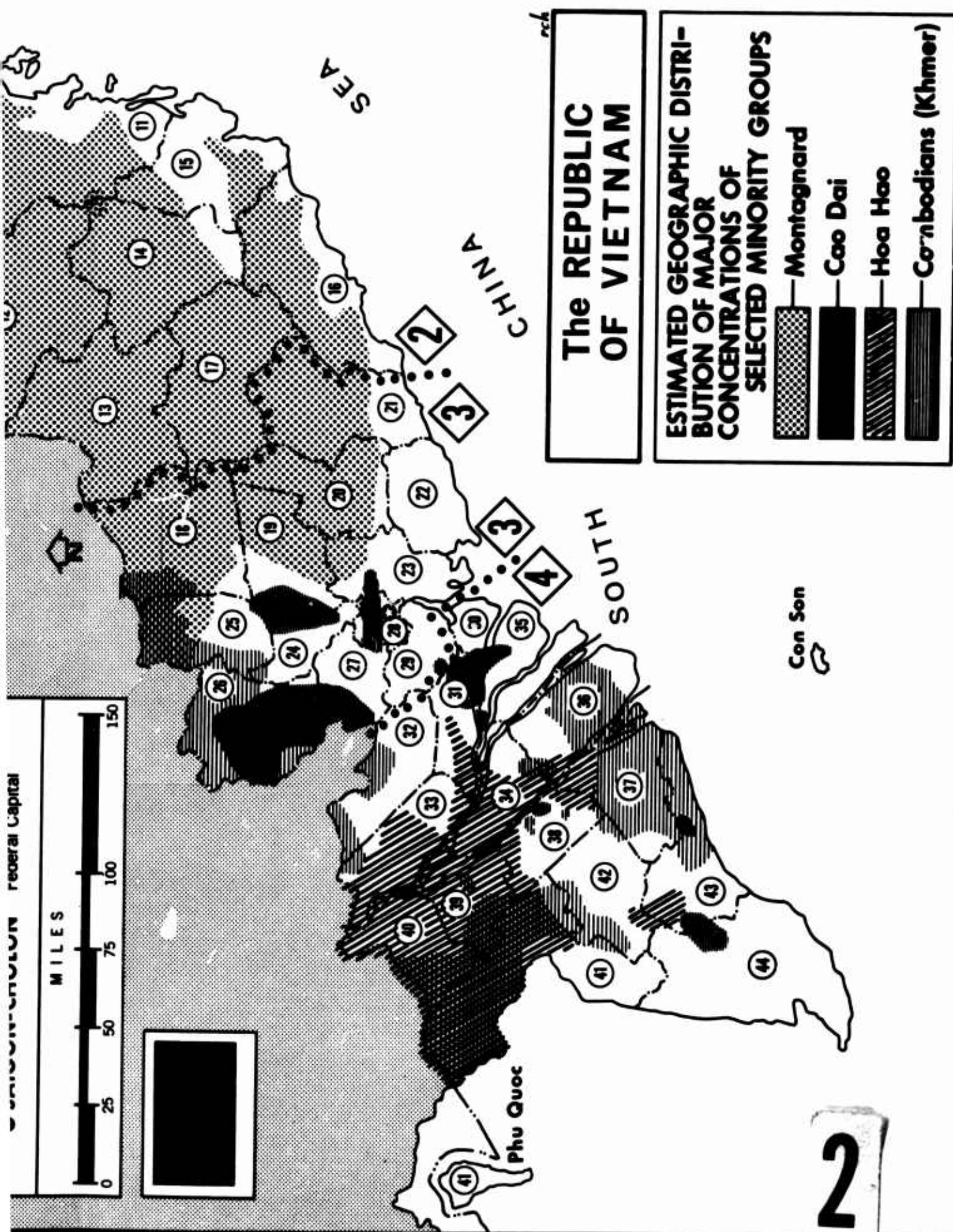
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SUMMARY(U)

PURPOSE(U)

(FOUO) The purpose of this study is to compile and present data to assist the U.S. Army in developing policy and doctrinal guidelines for civil-military functions and relationships among host-country ethnic and religious minorities during an active insurgency.

FACTS(U)

(U) 1. Since World War II an ideological contest for control of underdeveloped, usually former colonial, areas of the world has evolved.

(U) 2. In some areas this contest has taken the form of civil war, sponsored and abetted by one or more of the major Communist powers.

(U) 3. The U.S. Army, as an instrument of national policy, has been entrusted on several occasions with assisting threatened governments with advice, logistical support, military organization and training, and active intervention in combat.

(C) 4. Such assistance is currently being rendered by the U.S. Army in South Vietnam, where its effectiveness is more or less dependent upon the attitudes of various ethnic and religious minorities toward the central Vietnamese government.

ASSUMPTIONS(U)

(U) 1. Insurgency warfare directed against non-Communist governments in underdeveloped countries and U.S. assistance to those governments as a matter of national policy will continue into the foreseeable future.

(U) 2. The U.S. Army will continue to be called upon to render assistance to threatened governments as an instrument of national policy, pursuant to the objectives of that policy.

(C) 3. In undertaking its task of supporting host governments, U.S. Army personnel will be confronted with, or their actions may unintentionally generate, instances of antagonism by minority factions toward the host government. Such antagonism, while its exact form is not predictable, can be anticipated in general terms.

METHODOLOGY(U)

(U) In undertaking research into the problem, both published and unpublished documentary sources were studied, and many persons—military and civilian, U.S. and Vietnamese—were interviewed. Unpublished documents included U.S. Army and U.S. Department of State memoranda, reports, messages, and debriefings. Of special value were the periodic reports and debriefings of U.S. Army Special Forces officers with experience in dealing with the Vietnamese minorities.

(U) Limitations of time and the constraints of dealing through interpreters not unnaturally affected the breadth and depth of research. Documents of whose existence the researcher was unaware obviously escaped scrutiny, and the precise meaning of Vietnamese oral evidence may have been lost or distorted in translation. Nonetheless, enough facts, opinions, evaluations, and observations did coincide to provide a sound basis for certain findings and conclusions.

DISCUSSION(U)

(C) Evidence adduced by research and personal observation indicated that the U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) units in Vietnam were cognizant of and were applying sound principles in dealing both with the Vietnamese minorities and with elements of the Vietnamese Army. Doctrine enunciated locally, based on these principles, was obviously effective when and where it could be applied as intended.

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(C) In some instances USASF activities among the Vietnamese minorities generated apprehension in the central Vietnamese government that some minorities were being armed, organized, trained, and perhaps incited to revolt. Such apprehensions are natural in a situation in which an unstable government which includes elements with ancient grievances and potential seekers of power, is threatened by an externally supported insurgency. This matter is beyond the purview of the U.S. Army, whose task is clearly defined; alterations in the army's performance of its task are dependent upon guidance from the sources of national policy.

(FOUO) The evidence is clear that the U.S. Army has recognized the problems posed by the efficient accomplishment of its mission and has initiated measures to resolve or limit the effects of its actions. But, it must be reiterated, the army's scope in this area is limited by the boundaries of its own authority and discretion in the enunciation of policy.

(FOUO) Continuing work in this area could be rewarding if a compilation and evaluation of existing studies were undertaken. This compilation and evaluation may not only establish areas in which existing information is accepted as standard but also indicate gaps requiring further and more specific research.

CONCLUSIONS(U)

(C) 1. The current principles and doctrine of operations among South Vietnamese minorities are basically sound.

(C) 2. Decisions about undesirable side effects of these operations, inevitable in a politically and economically unstable society, must be made at policy levels of the U.S. Government.

(C) 3. Programs must not only protect minorities from insurgent retaliation but must also make sure that the people are not preyed upon by the "pacification" forces.

(FOUO) 4. Within the necessarily limited scope of their actions, U.S. Army elements in South Vietnam have performed a difficult task well.

(FOUO) 5. Any evaluation of the U.S. Army's role in insurgency and counterinsurgency will help to establish the limits of current knowledge and reveal the gaps that more study will fill.

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INTRODUCTION (U)

PURPOSE AND SCOPE (U)

(FOUO) This study was undertaken to compile and present data designed to assist the U. S. Army in developing policy and doctrinal guidelines for civil-military functions and relationships among host-country ethnic and religious minorities during an active insurgency.

(FOUO) It is the second subtask of the general task, "Counterinsurgency Military Activities with Civilians," instituted at CRESS to increase understanding of insurgency movements and counterinsurgency actions. The first subtask, carried out by Frederick H. Stires, was a preliminary case study of U. S. Army Special Forces counterpart and civil-military relations. Its report, published in November 1964, traced the development of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program and raised important questions of U. S. counterpart relations, minority elements in the CIDG program, and civic action and psychological operations.

(FOUO) The present report is the result of a further investigation into relations among minorities, U. S. Army personnel, and the Vietnamese armed forces.

DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION METHODS (U)

(FOUO) Primary reliance in collection of data was placed on documentary material, supplemented by interviews of military and civilian personnel with firsthand knowledge of CIDG operations among the minorities of South Vietnam. The extent and character of the documentary material will, in general, be indicated in the bibliography appended to this study, although a few documents were examined which, for one reason or another, were not included in the bibliography. (Access to these few documents is not essential to further exploration of any points or issues raised here, since their content or its implications are available in the documents cited.)

(FOUO) Interviews were conducted by the author at the U. S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare, Fort Bragg, N. C.; with Department of State representatives at Washington, D. C.; with members of the 1st Special Forces Group and the Broadcast and Visual Activity, Pacific (now the 7th Psychological Operations Group) on Okinawa; and with selected personnel of the 5th Special Forces Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV); the U. S. Operations Mission (USOM); the Joint U. S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO); American missionaries, the U. S. Embassy, Controlled American Sources (CAS); and Vietnamese officers and civilians in South Vietnam.

(FOUO) Throughout this process the results of both document search and interviews agreed with the findings of prior researchers to so great an extent as to amount in many cases to duplication. This concurrence was taken to indicate a considerable measure of support for the validity of both previous and present findings.

(FOUO) Four minorities with whom the Special Forces had extensive contact and who might be considered potential threats to the stability of the Vietnamese nation because of their size, state of organization, or militancy, were selected for study. These were the Montagnard and Cambodian ethnic factions and the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (U)

(U) The immense amount of data collected in the time allotted would have been quite impossible without the unstinting and often enthusiastic help of a great number of people. Because of their numbers and since, in many cases, to satisfy a desire for anonymity, their names were not recorded, no attempt has been made to name them here. Instead, the institutions, organizations, and agencies they represented must accept the author's gratitude for all.

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(U) The U. S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare and the U. S. Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg provided documents, interviews, and introductions to Special Forces personnel in Vietnam. Discussions with the commanding general and the G-3 staff at U. S. Army, Pacific gave additional insight into the situation in Vietnam. Much background material was gathered from the documents and personnel made available by the 1st Special Forces Group and the Broadcast and Visual Activity, Pacific. Little could have been accomplished in Vietnam without the willing cooperation of the MACV: Special thanks are due to the joint research and test activity for providing working space and a base of operations, to J-3 for air transportation throughout the country, and to the corps and sector advisory staffs who gave generously of their time and provided transportation and housing.

(U) The officers and civilians of the JUSPAO, especially the plans and program division and the field representatives, were most helpful. The author is especially grateful to all of the officers and men of the 5th Special Forces Group who assisted in planning trips to the field, gave their time, opened their files, provided housing and transportation, and were concerned with the author's personal safety. All treated him as a "member of the firm." The author is also most appreciative of the discussions and documents made available by the political section of the U. S. Embassy, Saigon, and the provincial operations section and field representatives of USOM.

(U) Finally, the author wishes to acknowledge a debt to those in CRESS and in the U. S. Army who reviewed a first draft of the report. Many of their comments and criticisms have been extremely useful in the preparation of later drafts.

(U) Despite his reliance on the kindness and the efforts of so many others, the author wishes to make it clear that the opinions, findings, and conclusions in this study, and the responsibility for them, are his alone.

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CHAPTER 1. THE PROBLEM: ITS NATURE AND GENESIS (U)

(U) Direct U.S. involvement in Vietnam was a product of the widespread political and economic chaos following World War II. Prominent among the causes of this chaos were the implacable political ambitions of the Soviet Union, Communist China after 1949, and the political unreadiness of many of the peoples who emerged, by force or by fiat, from colonialism to nationhood.

(U) French Catholic missionaries had had contact with the Vietnamese as far back as 1762 and other contacts were established shortly thereafter. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries some 300 Frenchmen advised Emperor Gia-Long in the Tay-Son rebellion, but French domination did not begin until 1859 and was not completed until 1913. Cochinchina, containing Saigon, became a French possession in 1867; Tonkin, including Hanoi and the Red River Delta, and Annam, with the ancient capital of Hue, were not made French protectorates until 1883-84. Indochina as a federated colonial territory, made up of these three Vietnamese areas and Cambodia and Laos, came into being in 1887. French supremacy in Vietnam lasted until 1940-41 when Japan assumed military control. Indochina, however, reverted to France after Japan's defeat in 1945. Beginning with the Bay of Along agreement in June 1948 and culminating in final ratification by the French government in February 1950, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos became three separate "associated states within the French Union." The French dream of creating an associated federation was never realized, even if the "independence" of the resulting three Indochinese states was certainly qualified by their "association" status. Mutual defense assistance agreements were signed by the United States in December 1950 with France, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos providing for military aid, through France, to the new states.

(U) Even before arrival of Allied forces in the Indochinese peninsula after World War II, the Soviet-trained Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) had taken steps to wrest control of the area from the French. At a party meeting in August 1945 a general uprising was decreed. The first step was to disarm occupying Japanese troops before the arrival of Allied contingents. Thus, organized and armed, the Viet Minh—as the Communist-led League for the Independence of Vietnam became known—proclaimed a Vietnamese republic in September. The French reentered North Vietnam with Viet Minh sufferance in March 1946.

(U) Chinese Communists, who had been in process of seizing control of their own country since 1945, reached the North Vietnamese border in November 1949, and the Viet Minh, under the political leadership of Ho Chi Minh, launched a full-scale attack on the French in October 1950. After nearly four years of conflict, and mounting war weariness at home, the French agreed, in a conference at Geneva, July 21, 1954, to abandon all political claims to Vietnam.

(U) The Geneva Conference partitioned the country at the seventeenth parallel into separate political entities: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The former was controlled by the Viet Minh under the leadership of Ho, who continued to be regarded, in both North and South, as the Vietnamese liberator. South Vietnam retained former Emperor Bao Dai as head of state with Ngo Dinh Diem as premier.

(U) Although represented at the Geneva Conference, the United States did not sign the agreement. But it did unilaterally renounce the use of force to "disturb" the provisions of the agreement, and declared that it would "view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as threatening international peace and security." This declaration has been the basis for subsequent U.S. actions in the area, and all official statements of aims there have reiterated or amplified it.

(U) With the relinquishment of French control in Vietnam, President Dwight D. Eisenhower assured Premier Diem in October 1954 that U.S. assistance would be given directly to Vietnam rather than through French authorities. At the same time, he stated his expectation that the Vietnamese regime would "undertak[e] needed reforms," an expectation which was met, at least ostensibly, in February 1955 by the announcement of extensive land reforms.

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(U) Nevertheless, the new republic, "partitioned by fiat . . . devoid of governmental machinery or military strength, drifting without leadership and without hope"¹ was faced in its early months with a series of revolts by ethnic and religious factions within its population. These were complicated by Communist-inspired disturbances of mounting seriousness and intensity. A large-scale Communist guerrilla attack north of Saigon in January 1958 signaled the beginning of unqualified insurgency.

(U) The young nation's first steps toward independence and self-government were halting and confused. Bao Dai was deposed in 1955 and Diem assumed the presidency, only to be deposed in turn and assassinated in November 1963 by a military junta. This junta set up a provisional government with Nguyen Ngoc Tho as premier, which was superseded early in January 1964 by a triumvirate headed by Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh. The triumvirate lasted until January 30, when it was overthrown in a military coup led by Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh who, in August 1964, was elected president by the Revolutionary Military Council and took office promising many libertarian reforms. In September an anti-Khanh coup led by Brig. Gen. Lam Van Phat failed, Phan Khac Suu was elected head of state in October, and Tran Van Huong was named premier in November. Then, January 27, 1965, Tran Van Huong was ousted and Khanh returned to power, naming Nguyen Xuan Oanh as premier. Oanh lasted until February 16, when the armed forces named Phan Huy Quat premier and four days later demanded Khanh's resignation, which he tendered on February 21. Quat then became president until June 1965, when he handed control back to the armed forces. Air Force Maj. Gen. Nguyen Cao Ky was then named premier, a post he still held at the termination of research for this study.²

(U) In the meantime, the United States as part of its aid to South Vietnam had supplied a small Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) to help organize and train the new nation's army. This small force was to be the nucleus for a major military commitment in support of the policy enunciated by the United States at Geneva.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE U.S. ARMY (U)

(U) Assignment of USMAAG personnel to South Vietnam during the first five years after the Geneva agreement amounted to fewer than 700 annually. Not committed as combat troops, they, of necessity, engaged in combat when the local forces they advised were attacked. Beginning early in 1962, not only had the numbers of U.S. Army personnel in South Vietnam grown (3,600 in January of that year), but the mission and the character of the forces themselves underwent a change. Concurrently with President Diem's "strategic hamlet" program of 1962, U.S. forces undertook the task of training local militia and Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) so that the people of the hamlets might protect themselves against incursions by the Vietnamese Communists (Viet Cong or VC). The South Vietnamese Communist Party is officially known as the People's Revolutionary Party, officially established on January 1, 1962—nearly two years after the founding of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (December 20, 1960). The People's Revolutionary Party is of course nothing more than a branch of the Lao Dong (North Vietnamese Workers' Party). The name Viet Cong was applied to South Vietnamese Communists by the Saigon government.

(U) This CIDG program actually was a two-pronged effort. It was designed not only to afford a measure of security to rural hamlets but to make their inhabitants aware of the concern and support of the national government and so instill in them a sense of loyalty and responsibility to that government. Not unnaturally the major CIDG effort was directed at the many ethnic minorities whose identity with the central government was minimal and whose attitude toward the government was incipiently, if not actively, hostile.

(U) The first major U.S. Army effort in this program was started among the Montagnards, the hill tribesmen west and north of the Mekong Delta. It has been extended and expanded until U.S. Army officers and men have had intimate experience with virtually every rural ethnic

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or political faction and religious sect in the country. These contacts have resulted in varying degrees of success and, regardless of success or failure, have made a great deal of knowledge and experience available to the U.S. Army for guidance in comparable future situations. They also have raised, for reasons beyond the U.S. Army's control, occasional diplomatic issues with the government at Saigon.

U.S. ARMY AND NATIONAL POLICY (U)

(U) It is axiomatic that military forces are the instruments of national policy, subservient to that policy and to conducting their affairs so as to carry out the aims of policy. And it was as an instrument of the U.S. policy enunciated at Geneva and repeated by every administration since that the U.S. Army was committed to South Vietnam, first in an advisory role and finally as a major combat force.

(U) Whatever the nature of its mission, the U.S. Army has had to exercise in Vietnam a role implicit in the nature of armies—the conduct of civil affairs, inescapable so long as troops are in contact with civilians, whether friendly, neutral, or hostile. Until World War II the U.S. Army carried out this role at home and abroad almost entirely without policy guidance; in Vietnam and in comparable situations, the conduct of civil affairs is so intimately concerned with the conduct and aims of policy that guidance and coordination at the policy-making level are imperative.³

(U) Again, it is axiomatic that the overriding responsibility of any military commander is the accomplishment of his mission and the security of his force. In the light of this responsibility, the proper conduct of civil affairs is a command function inseparable from the achievement of mission and security. But in wars of pacification and in the current context of ideological warfare among politically apathetic or unsympathetic peoples, civil affairs (or civic action) becomes a weapon whose adroit use may be more effective than any amount of force.

(U) The adroit exercise of the civil affairs function appears to require not only some comprehension of the thought processes of those to be influenced, but an understanding of their peculiar problems and a sympathetic approach to their aspirations. These requirements are not ordinarily met by the simple exercise of material charity or, at the other extreme, by the imposition of political or ideological ideals toward which the local population may be temperamentally or by habit disinclined.

(FOUO) In this context, it may be noted that during research for this study the complaint was frequently encountered in documents and in interviews that the South Vietnamese or certain Vietnamese elements were not as highly "motivated" as their Viet Cong counterparts appeared to be. These observations overlook the fact that the "highly motivated" Viet Cong represent but a small fraction of the total South Vietnamese population, while at least an equally large fraction appears to have been sufficiently motivated toward the central government to fight the Viet Cong and to endure rather heavy casualties in the process.

(FOUO) This example suggests that motivation is not a function merely of local attitudes but of the manner in which these attitudes are manipulated or cultivated. Interviews by the author and other researchers with captured and defected Viet Cong indicate that the Communist appeal is more materialistic than idealistic and attuned to existing discontents rather than abstract promises for the future.

(FOUO) Many observers have cited, as an example of the lack of South Vietnamese motivation, the general or partial failure of the village self-help programs to achieve the results expected. Perhaps this does reflect a lack of motivation, but it may proceed from the usually predictable inability of societies to strive for something for which they do not recognize a need, at the price of what they are accustomed to, comfortable with, or regard as essential. Thus, a society born to observe an afternoon siesta could hardly be expected to embrace with enthusiasm any system, however rich with promise, that made their siesta impossible. It scarcely seems to need emphasis that "motivation" toward a new political or economic system

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would best succeed if the system guaranteed a siesta and held it to be a right worth striving for.

HUMANITARIAN APPROACH (U)

(U) The foregoing leads directly to the sincerely reiterated postulate that "you can't fight ideas with guns." Theoretically this is true enough, but it oversimplifies the considerations briefly mentioned above. It ignores the realities of the situation with which the government of the United States and the U.S. Army, as its instrument of policy, must contend.

(U) It is undeniable and, in fact, clearly demonstrable, that apolitical and politically inexperienced peoples may be assisted toward the achievement of cohesive and economically viable societies. But in order to afford this assistance there must be access to the peoples involved, and it must be free from external coercion, terror, threats, violence, and reprisals. If such access is denied by military force then it must be gained and maintained by military force, or any hope of applying sociological, economic, or humanitarian measures will have to be abandoned.

(U) The application of force, even to achieve a humanitarian end, is not often a humanitarian measure. If humanitarian ends are desired and force must be applied to make them possible, a dilemma is fostered from whose horns no escape seems yet to have been devised. It may appear to be begging the question or simply stating the obvious to say that force and humanitarian processes must somehow be combined in the proper measures and at the proper times and places to minimize the havoc of one and realize most fully the benefits of the other. This answer has been recognized by the U.S. Army, and this study is one of many probing for means of making it fruitful.

(U) A corollary of all this is that, in insurgency warfare, it is not sufficient to gain control of a populated area. In view of the ease with which relatively large populations may be terrorized into submission and collaboration by very small insurgent forces, control must be maintained. Formation and training of the village defense and strike forces of the CIDG program recognized this principle, and their less than complete success in no way denigrates the principle itself.

(FOUO) To maintain control of an area, a force must be armed, able, and willing to fight for control. All of these attributes are mutually dependent; an armed force is worthless if untrained and consequently not able; if armed and able, it is still worthless if unwilling. It is this last attribute with which U.S. Army effort has become concerned and indications that it has not been fully developed have provided the impetus for this and many other studies.

ALTERED NATURE OF THE PROBLEM (U)

(C) First U.S. Army contacts with the army and the people of South Vietnam were made by MAAG personnel and, beginning in 1957, by elements of the specially trained U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF). These troops trained commando and other special forces of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and, beginning in 1962, took part in training village self-defense and strike force units under the CIDG program which was, in turn, a feature of Diem's strategic hamlet plan.

(C) Thus, until the heavy and rapid buildup of U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam began in early 1965, American military contacts with ethnic and religious minorities were made largely through specially trained and oriented troops. This situation now has been radically altered. U.S. Army forces still must train those of the ARVN, assist villagers in establishing their own means of defense, and do what is possible to promote acceptance of the central government among the minorities. At the same time they must also assume a considerable share of the combat burden, with resultant dislocation, devastation, and even mortality among those whose friendship is sought and who may regard the war as no real concern of theirs.

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(U) This is to say that the program initiated in 1955 with specially prepared troops must be continued under greater difficulties and with troops trained almost exclusively for combat. Is there, or can there be developed, a body of doctrine adapted to current conditions and applicable by a large combat army not specially trained and probably not susceptible to adequate special training in the circumstances and the time available?

(U) The experiences of the MAAG and the USASF will be examined in an effort to discern what lessons may be applicable to the requirements of this altered problem.

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CHAPTER 2. THE MONTAGNARDS (U)

(U) The Montagnards, or hill tribes, are a relatively primitive people inhabiting the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Those in South Vietnam include 26 to 35 ethnolinguistic elements of Mon-Khmer or Malayo-Polynesian stock. Each is commonly referred to as a tribe, although recent observation indicates only occasional formal organization beyond the village.

(U) Origins of the Montagnards are not fully known, except that they inhabited all of what is now South Vietnam until the Cham invasion from the west and south near the beginning of the Christian era. By the third century the Chams had firmly established their kingdom of Champa, driving the tribesmen into the less fertile highlands. Also in the third century, infiltration by the Vietnamese began southward from China into Champa, at first peacefully. Vietnamese expansion continued, against growing resistance from the Chams, until by the mid-eighteenth century they had conquered all of what is now Vietnam.

(U) In this long history of colonization and conquest, the Montagnards remained in their highlands, alien and inherently hostile to the successive conquerors of their homeland. In the wars which determined who would master the rich lowlands, the Montagnards fought both with and against Vietnamese and Chams, depending on where they thought their best interests lay. The net result of this extended conflict was to push them deeper into the highlands and to isolate them further from sympathy with whatever government ruled at the national capital.

(U) Vietnamese efforts to move into the piedmont and the mountains of the Central Highlands have been thwarted by the Montagnards. Their success in halting these inroads may be attributed not only to their fierce fighting instinct but to their strong identification with their tribal lands, their intimate knowledge of the terrain, and the lack of any really strong pioneering spirit among the Vietnamese. This successful resistance and the fact that the mountain strongholds provided a buffer against the Khmer Empire in the west (modern Cambodia) led the Vietnamese to adopt toward the Montagnards a laissez-faire policy.

(U) Bernard Fall, in his *The Two Viet-Nams*, sums up the situation thus: "The Vietnamese kings . . . simply left [the Montagnards] to their own devices after the tribal chieftains had made their formal submission and paid a symbolic tribute." Such a policy not only maintained the isolation of the Montagnards from the Vietnamese and from the mainstream of culture but reduced any possibility of mutual understanding. As a result of this isolation and of sporadic warfare between the two, strong feelings of mutual distrust and suspicion developed, and the immutability of Montagnard customs and thought was reinforced with time.

(U) The French were forced to deal with this problem as best they could after their colonization of Vietnam. Administrative control over the ethnic Vietnamese was exercised through a French hierarchy which extended from the governor general down to the province level, each Vietnamese province being directed by a French civil servant. The Vietnamese emperor and the traditional (Mandarin) system of administration were maintained but, in Fall's words, "Every one of their acts, except those dealing with such minor religious matters as setting the exact date of moveable holidays, required the signature of the resident supérieur." The French maintained the physical and administrative separation of the Montagnard tribes from the Vietnamese. Northern and southern mountain zones were established in the highlands, within which Montagnards served as province chiefs. Vietnamese were not allowed to enter Montagnard territory without express authorization from French administrators.

(U) These policies resulted in both assistance to and exploitation of the Montagnards. On the one hand, some modern medical attention and elementary education were given, a special judicial system based on tribal law and customs was instituted, and a rather crude network of roads and bridges built. On the other hand, French military posts were constructed in the highlands, Montagnard land was confiscated for plantations and resorts, and Montagnards were forced to labor on the new roads and on the plantations. The Montagnards, however, appear to have been more impressed with the constructive activities of the French than with their exploitation. Frederick Wickert writes:

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In general, the tribespeople remember the French with considerable warmth. They seem to have forgotten that the French forced them to work on roads and plantations. Tribesmen who once were former French Army soldiers, remain particularly loyal. Some of these learned to speak the French language very well. The tribespeople were mostly impressed with their memories of how well the French took care of them, especially in contrast to the little attention they sometimes received from the Vietnamese to date.¹

(U) The French also organized some Montagnard military units, each made up of and commanded by members of one tribe. In 1951 the 4th Vietnamese Division, composed of these tribal units, was activated under command of a French general officer. This division was reported by observers to have conducted itself very well in battle against the Viet Minh.

(U) While it may have suited the requirements of French colonial government, the differentiation between highland and lowland administrations aggravated the differences between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese. The deterioration of the medical and educational programs and the road network after the French departure in 1954 did nothing toward the development of rapport between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese government.

(U) These difficulties were further complicated by the overall political situation in South Vietnam when the French left. Not only did the new government have to contend with normal problems of administration, but it had to resettle and absorb almost a million refugees from the North. The French had given the Vietnamese very little actual administrative experience or training. Furthermore, first-hand Vietnamese knowledge of the Montagnards was virtually nonexistent. Despite, or because of, this lack of experience and understanding, the Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem imposed its own administrative and judicial system on the Montagnards, and appointed ethnic Vietnamese as district and province chiefs in Montagnard territory.

(U) In 1955 the South Vietnamese government initiated a program of relocating refugees from the North in the delta and Central Highlands regions. The establishment of ethnic Vietnamese villages in the highlands reversed the policies and practices of the French toward the Montagnards. These villages, called land development centers, in which some 200,000 Vietnamese were settled in the course of three years, were in areas looked upon by the Montagnards as traditional farm and pasture lands. About 150 villages were built and 220,000 acres brought under cultivation, principally in the provinces of Darlac, Pleiku, and Kontum, near the provincial capital cities. Begun as an expedient for resettling refugees from the North, the program later was expanded to accommodate South Vietnamese from the overcrowded lowland coastal area.

(U) Other policies and programs of the Diem government also aroused strong resentment among the Montagnards. From lack of interest, economic pressures, or simply administrative ineptitude, the government abandoned or neglected the French medical and educational reforms. Vietnamese-controlled prices in the marketplace were regarded by the Montagnards as designed to enrich the Vietnamese at their expense. And there were complaints about the general ineffectiveness of the untrained Vietnamese officials sent to administer Montagnard affairs.

(C) These various sources of discontent bred an active hostility which, in 1958, exploded in an armed uprising, involving principally the Rhade, Jarai, and Bahnar tribes against the Vietnamese government. After the uprising had been rather easily suppressed, two of its leaders, Y Bham Enoul and Paul Nur, were jailed. Both were released when the Diem government fell five years later and Nur, a Bahnar, became deputy chief for Montagnard affairs in Kontum Province. Y Bham, a Rhade, is considered one of the leaders of Front Unifié de Lutte de la Race Opprimée (FULRO), a movement which will be discussed below.

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(U) The Diem government appeared to have been little affected by this uprising or concerned with improving its relations with the highlanders. In 1959, it reiterated a decree of December 1958 which prohibited Montagnards from owning land. Also in 1959 the government initiated a program designed to assimilate the tribes into Vietnamese culture patterns and afford them the protection of the Vietnamese Army. Both of these actions served principally to aggravate Montagnard resentments and to heighten their suspicions of and hostility to the central government.

(C) Under the assimilation and protection program the tribesmen were to be resettled in areas more readily accessible to the army than were their native mountains. The program was started on a small scale among the Rhade, some of whom were resettled in selected locations, allotted small parcels of land, housed in Vietnamese type dwellings, taught lowland agricultural techniques, and required to teach the Vietnamese language in their schools. With the increased Viet Cong threat in 1961, the government began a resettlement of about 35,000 tribesmen in Kontum Province and initiated other similar programs. These relocated Montagnards were not to be armed but were to rely on the Vietnamese Army for protection. All of these measures represented abrupt, undesirable, and forced social and economic changes which the tribesmen bitterly resented. And even though the programs proceeded slowly and not always satisfactorily, they were adhered to throughout the Diem regime.²

AUTONOMY MOVEMENT (U)

(C) Conditions tending to stimulate ideas of independence among the Montagnards are many and of long standing. The centuries-old relations between the hill tribes and the Cham and then the Vietnamese seem sufficient in themselves to have induced a desire for independence or at least for political autonomy. Further fuel for this desire no doubt was provided by the French administrative practice of differentiation between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese and by the French promise at one time of autonomy to the Rhade.

(S) More recently, Viet Cong propaganda broadcasts from Hanoi in the Montagnard dialects have promised autonomy to the southern Montagnard tribes after a Viet Cong victory. That these long-standing conditions did not lead to ancient, continuous, and sometimes violent attempts at independence may possibly be attributed to the tribal fragmentation of the Montagnards, the absence of a concept of ethnic unity under an adequate leader, and perhaps the habits of lifelong acceptance by the hillmen. Nevertheless, such a movement did recently develop, and so quietly that it was already well organized when its existence was discovered by the United States in 1962.

(S) The organization heading this autonomy movement was the Front Unifié de Lutte de la Race Opprimée (FULRO), which may be translated as "The United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Race." By June 1964 it was known that the movement centered around four major tribes—the Rhade, the Jarai, the Koho, and the Bahnar—and that at least three smaller tribes had recently associated themselves with it. The high committee of FULRO proclaimed on August 1, 1964, and again on December 20, 1964, that it spoke for fourteen Montagnard tribes and for the Cambodians in South Vietnam.

(S) The real strength of the FULRO organization is not positively known, though it has been reported that its members regard themselves as a "secret nation," with their own president, who may or may not be the leader of FULRO. A flag symbolizing the "nation" has been designed and produced and each of the tribes associated with it has elected or appointed members to an autonomy committee. Delegates from these committees meet periodically in general conference to discuss and plan the strategy and future of the movement.

(S) While the aims of FULRO as expressed in its proclamations and declarations are specified as "liberation from the Vietnamese yoke," and autonomy has been demanded at various times, it is by no means clear that establishment of a separate nation is being sought. Many of its demands, or "aspirations" as the Montagnards call them, relate to equality of

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treatment and opportunity. However, other demands presented to the Vietnamese government do contain the concept of a separate Montagnard nation with its own government, its own military, and its own flag, whose relations with South Vietnam would be on a commercial level, with no restrictions on trade or movement between the two areas. Many U.S. military and civilian observers feel that these latter demands, however positive they may seem, were advanced to establish a position from which to negotiate.

(S) The generally supposed leader of FULRO is Y Bham Enoul, who was jailed for his part in the 1958 uprising and freed when the Diem government fell in 1963; indications are that he continued to lead the Rhade movement from his jail cell. On his release he was appointed deputy province chief for Montagnard affairs for Darlac Province. He served in this post until September 1964, when he took part in another uprising and fled to Cambodia from where he is believed to have directed FULRO since.

(S) FULRO has been associated with several incidents and two uprisings since 1958. Early in 1963, U.S. representatives persuaded the leaders of FULRO to "surrender" to the Vietnamese government and to cooperate with them against the Viet Cong. The leaders of the movement wished to talk with President Diem prior to any agreement and were asked to meet first with General Khanh, at that time commander of II Corps, with whom they apparently had a fruitful discussion. However, Diem decided not to meet or negotiate with the FULRO leaders, a snub which increased existing tensions and stimulated the expansion of the movement among the Montagnards. It is known that Bahnar representatives to FULRO unsuccessfully urged a revolt against the Vietnamese early in 1964.

(S) On September 20, 1964, Montagnard strike forces in five CIDG camps near Ban Me Thuot attempted to occupy the city in a coordinated uprising against the Vietnamese, a move attributed to FULRO. The uprising was primarily a Rhade affair, although the Rhade evidently considered themselves to be acting for all the Montagnards. In at least two CIDG camps, copies of a proclamation and declaration by the "High Committee of the United Struggle of the Oppressed Race (FULRO)," dated August 20 and September 20, were found. Both documents were signed by Y Bham, who was at the time chief of Darlac Province and was living in Ban Me Thuot. In each of the CIDG camps, with the exception of Buon Brieng, the rebellion was initiated when elements of the Montagnard strike force put the U.S. Special Forces into "protective custody." This was followed by the capture or killing of Vietnamese Special Forces and other Vietnamese military in the CIDG camp. In Buon Brieng the U.S. Army Special Forces detachment commander took control of the camp and prevented an uprising.

(S) Although the immediate objective of the uprising was to gain control of the city of Ban Me Thuot, there were no well-defined goals beyond this action. The rebellious troops were able to capture a radio station on the outskirts of Ban Me Thuot but did not reach the city itself. The revolt was broken up by intervention of U.S. Army Special Forces personnel and members of the U.S. military advisory staff in II Corps. American military personnel unsuccessfully sought to prevent an advance of the Vietnamese armed forces on one of the CIDG camps during negotiations. On the morning of September 20, members of the Buon Sa Pa CIDG strike force informed Americans in Ban Me Thuot that they wanted a Montagnard president, a Montagnard army, and Montagnard autonomy in the highlands. That evening, Montagnard leaders from the Buon Erao training camp met with the II Corps commander and presented him with the following demands:

1. Montagnard representation at various levels of government.
2. Assignment of Montagnard personnel in the armed forces in the highlands only.
3. Equality for Montagnards in government.
4. The withdrawal of Vietnamese Special Forces from the CIDG and their replacement by trained Montagnard officers.
5. Better education for the Montagnards and the teaching of the Montagnard languages in the schools of the highlands.

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(S) These were the most specific demands presented to the Vietnamese throughout the rebellion. However, it was not clear whether these demands were being made on behalf of the leadership of the rebellion or whether they were made independently.

(S) The role that Y Bham played in the rebellion has still not been determined. As Darlac Province chief he had pressured for a Montagnard prime minister, a 50,000-man Montagnard army and direct U.S. advice and U.S. aid. These demands were expressed in the early morning of September 20, to a U.S. Embassy official who reported that Y Bham was involved in the revolt but did not agree to the anti-American wording of the September 20 declaration by the high committee of FULRO.

(S) In the aftermath of the September uprising officials of the government of South Vietnam lay the blame for the revolt squarely on the Americans. At a meeting of Vietnamese and U.S. military late in November, the U.S. military agreed to support Vietnamese policies toward the CIDG camps involved in the uprising, and came out of the meetings feeling that any programs involving the Montagnards should be primarily Vietnamese. American support for such programs, it was felt, should be given in a manner which makes it clear to both the Vietnamese and the Montagnards that the government of South Vietnam is both sponsor and director.

(S) The September uprising also led to a meeting between Vietnamese officials and Montagnard civil servants from Kontum Province. This meeting was held on October 13 to discuss some twelve demands presented by the Montagnards. A similar meeting was also held in Pleiku on October 15, at which 70 demands were presented. The situation between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese seemed to settle down after October of 1964.

(S) Late in July 1965, 367 FULRO troops were reported in the vicinity of the Buon Brieng CIDG camp in Darlac Province; it was first thought that the appearance of this group signaled another Montagnard uprising. It was then learned that the troops wished to rally to the Vietnamese government if certain conditions were met. It also became evident later that they included emissaries from Y Bham, the leader of FULRO.

(S) On July 30 General Westmoreland and the chief of the political section of the U.S. Embassy went to Ban Me Thuot to discuss the FULRO problem at the request of General Co, the Vietnamese Minister of Defense. General Westmoreland and the Embassy representative urged that Y Bham be asked to return to South Vietnam with his followers and that they be given an area of military operational responsibility. It was agreed that the governments of South Vietnam and the United States would prepare statements for delivery to Y Bham clearly setting forth the positions of both and holding out some inducements for Y Bham to return. The U.S. statement asserted that the United States was assisting the Vietnamese government, and that any assistance given to the Montagnards must be at the request of and through that government. There are indications that this statement was designed to dissipate Vietnamese suspicions of American motives regarding the Montagnards and to undercut FULRO propaganda that the United States supported Montagnard aspirations.

(C) The statements were presented on the morning of August 2 when Vietnamese officials, including Defense Minister General Co and II Corps Commander, Gen. Vinh Loc, and a U.S. delegation, including General Throckmorton and the head of the political section of the U.S. Embassy, met with FULRO representatives in Ban Me Thuot. It is reported that the meeting went well despite some friction when a FULRO battalion after first refusing to leave the Buon Brieng CIDG camp, moved out of the camp taking approximately 400 of the camp's Montagnard CIDG complement with them. This was contrary to the understanding reached on July 30.

(C) General Co remarked that

Official statements of GVN and USG had shown good will toward the highlanders, that return of Y Bham and his followers was desired so that highlanders and lowlanders could cooperate to fight VC and to build better life in highlands. He stated that Montagnards should indicate what they wanted (he mentioned dispensaries and schools)

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and Vietnamese would cooperate. He noted that the educational level of Montagnards was not high, that they could not sustain independent status "at present," and that they should concentrate on education of young which might allow them to do so at some point in future.³

(C) It was agreed that the FULRO units would withdraw to an area designated by the government of South Vietnam, remain there and make no attacks or disturbances. It was further decided that the government of South Vietnam would supply rice to the FULRO units until the FULRO emissary, Y Ngo, had delivered the agreements to Y Bham and returned.

(C) The FULRO returnees were eventually sent to Duc My for training and integration into the regional forces. Indications are that the troops and their families were inadequately housed and fed; the Montagnard project officer of USOM's provincial operations section, reporting a conversation with the director of Montagnard affairs, wrote that the FULRO returnees had gone on strike in October and refused to train until they and their families were properly clothed and cared for. On October 6, the USOM representative spoke with the Darlac Province chief in Ban Me Thuot. The USOM representative reported that,

There were 367 FULRO returnees who were now at Duc My and there had been some trouble because these people were ill-clothed and it was cold in the mountains. Also, the Province Chief admitted, the center at Duc My was unprepared to receive them when these troops were sent there. There was a need for blankets, cots, large cooking pots, plates, bowls, knives, spoons, forks, mosquito nets, canteens and warm clothing.⁴

(C) A personal interview with the USOM representative on October 15 revealed that all of the needs of the returnees still had not been met. The USOM representative was looking for several hundred canteens for the returnees. No further information about this affair has come to the author.

(C) Military uprisings, directed by FULRO, occurred throughout the Central Highlands on December 18, 1965. FULRO had evidently planned for a general uprising throughout the highlands in II Corps area. The plan required that a Montagnard strike force from a number of CIDG camps would defect and join FULRO units to attack the cities of Pleiku, Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, Gia Nghia and Cheo Reo, each the capital of a province. The attempt to carry out this plan on the night of December 17-18 had very limited success. FULRO troops did occupy Gia Nghia without firing a shot and overran Phu Thien district headquarters. However, while the CIDG strike forces manifested varying degrees of unrest there was no wholesale defection to FULRO. The government of South Vietnam regained control of Gia Nghia and Phu Thien with little difficulty and by December 19 the unrest at the CIDG camps had ended, FULRO units in the vicinity of Cheo Reo and Ban Me Thuot had disappeared, many FULRO troops had been captured, and the government had apparently reestablished control.

(C) About three weeks before the uprising, four letters from FULRO were delivered to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The United States had established a policy against accepting communications from FULRO and the letters were photographed and turned over to the Vietnamese prime minister's office. Embassy officers stated that the United States had no interest in FULRO and stressed that the differences between FULRO and the government of South Vietnam should be resolved by that government.

(C) The letters were addressed to the President of the United States, the President of France, the President of the United Nations Security Council, and the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon. They announced and explained the creation of a "Federal State of the Montagnard-Chams People," and requested that the South Vietnamese highlands be placed under a temporary United Nations trusteeship, administered jointly by France and the United States, until the Montagnard people were ready for full independence.

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(C) There are two important aspects of the December 18 Montagnard uprising. First is the fact that more tribes were involved in this uprising than in that of September 1964, some fifteen months earlier. The December uprising involved Rhade, Bahnar, and Jarai certainly, and most probably Muong and Mnong tribesmen. This indicates that FULRO had been able to extend its support among the tribesmen and expand its organizational apparatus beyond the Rhade tribe. These activities have undoubtedly been made possible by a continuing, if not growing, discontent among the Montagnards regarding the policies and activities of the South Vietnamese government.

(C) Second, even though the U.S. Government stated very clearly to FULRO, after the September revolt, that its policies and activities were to assist the government of South Vietnam and that any relationship it might have with the Montagnards would be at the request of and through the South Vietnamese government, FULRO is still seeking direct U.S. support for its objectives.

U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITY WITH THE MONTAGNARDS (U)

(FOUO) U.S. military contact with the Montagnards has been primarily through the U.S. Army Special Forces in the CIDG program. This section will examine those policies and activities within the CIDG program which may have increased tensions between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese and between the U.S. Government and the government of South Vietnam.

(S) The Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) effort is designed as a program of the government of South Vietnam, but it was developed largely through U.S. initiative. The original concept was to recruit, train, and utilize personnel familiar with the terrain for surveillance along the Cambodian and Laotian borders. This was considered to be most important in the sparsely populated but strategically important rural areas, such as the Central Highlands. The program was initiated late in 1961 under the operational control of the Combined Studies Division (CSD) of MACV. A training center was established at Buon Enao in the Central Highlands to train Rhade tribesmen for border surveillance duty. U.S. Army Special Forces personnel were given initial responsibility for military training. At least one member of the Vietnamese Armed Forces was involved in the program. It should be noted that several observers interviewed are convinced that permission to initiate the program was granted by the government of South Vietnam because they did not think it would be successful.

(S) After the program got started at Buon Enao, and word spread to other villages that Montagnards were being trained and armed to fight the Viet Cong, a number of village chiefs came to Buon Enao to request training to defend their villages.* The number and earnestness of such requests led to an expansion of the original program. The new concept envisaged the organization and use of Montagnards as local paramilitary forces to assist the government in the control of strategically important rural areas which were threatened by the Viet Cong, but which were not being reached by government troops. U.S. Army Special Forces were then given the responsibility not only for training the paramilitary forces, but also for providing logistical and administrative support.

(S) As the program progressed and more and more Montagnards were trained and armed, the government of South Vietnam indicated some alarm. Three to four months after the program began the Vietnamese government requested that it be reevaluated, with the result that Vietnamese Special Forces were introduced into the CIDG camps as a parallel organization to the U.S. Special Forces teams. The program itself was to be carried out by the Vietnamese Special Forces with U.S. personnel as advisors. Logistical support, including paying the troops (with U.S. funds), as well as training, was to be taken over by the ARVN.

(S) Under the revised program, CIDG camps were set up near several hamlets, from each of which men came to the camp for military training. Concurrently with the training, defenses

*Interview with CAS. There are indications elsewhere that this Montagnard response may not have been altogether spontaneous, but the result of groundwork by U.S. personnel.

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were built around each village and around the CIDG camp. Hamlet militia and a strike force were to be trained, the former as part-time soldiers to provide local defense for the hamlets, the latter to form several companies of full-time soldiers to be used to reinforce any hamlet as required. By April 1962, 140 villages in an area of 60 square kilometers had been brought into the program.

(S) As a result of a Department of Defense decision in June 1962, Combined Studies Division personnel were phased out of the program during a one-year period beginning in July 1962, in an operation called SWITCHBACK. Army Special Forces in Vietnam assumed full operational responsibility for the program on July 1, 1963, by which time over twenty CIDG camps were in existence.

(S) Until the U.S. Army Special Forces assumed formal operational control of the program, the Special Forces detachments were not in close contact with the Vietnamese military hierarchy. They were not responsible to the district chief, the province chief, or any other Vietnamese official, even though Vietnamese Special Forces were in the CIDG camps. All supplies for the detachments, for the strike forces, and for the hamlet militia were paid for by special funds. Throughout the Diem regime, the Vietnamese Special Forces reported directly to a Colonel Tung who reported directly to Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's brother and advisor. A number of American participants in the program during these early months felt that the Vietnamese Special Forces acted primarily as an intelligence agency for the Diem government in Saigon. It was their opinion that the Saigon government was concerned about, and sought to check on, the relationship between the U.S. Army Special Forces and the Montagnards.¹

(S) A MACV directive dated June 21, 1963, on the subject of "Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Programs," spells out the responsibilities of the U.S. Army upon assuming operational CIDG control. These included:

1. Assisting the Vietnamese Special Forces Command to develop a measure of self-protection for isolated families under VC domination, reduce any support capability to VC, disrupt VC activities and create obstacles to VC movement, provide an intelligence capability within the areas developed, and integrate isolated families into the Republic of South Vietnam economic and political patterns.
2. Providing U.S. operational training and advisory support to appropriate RVN Special Forces agencies in establishing CIDG camps.
3. Providing supervision of U.S. logistical and administrative effort to support the CIDG programs.
4. Supervising U.S. elements in developing specific project areas and coordinating U.S. effort for the turnover of hamlets to the province.
5. Coordinating with MAAG advisors and other appropriate U.S. agencies on the development of, general activity in, and ultimate turnover of, CIDG areas.
6. Perform other missions as required by COMUSMACV.

(S) In effect, the role of the Army Special Forces teams in the CIDG program was to be limited to giving advice and support to the Vietnamese Special Forces, which were to conduct training, issue equipment, be the paymasters, and generally operate in a manner indicating that the CIDG program was in fact a project of the government of South Vietnam.

(S) The principles embodied in the MACV directive were sound but its results were not altogether those foreseen, for reasons given in his debriefing report by Col. Theodore Leonard, who commanded the U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam from November 1963 through July 1964. Colonel Leonard stated:

A point that must be mentioned here is the role of U.S. Special Forces versus the role of Vietnamese Special Forces. Theoretically, when the Vietnamese Special Forces were organized—these troops represented the best of the RVN to carry to the people a

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hope for the future by energetically recruiting, organizing and training local people in the art of guerrilla warfare to effectively combat the Viet Cong. The program never really pursued this line of action, but rather devoted itself to building up a semi-regular and conventional force to extend the conventional battle fields from areas strongly held by ARVN in rural areas where the Strike Force and other para-military elements bear the brunt of battle. Introduction of the U.S. Special Forces to "advise" the Vietnamese Special Forces did not change the evident building up of a semi-regular and conventional force. Presence of U.S. Special Forces personnel provided a sense of permanency perhaps and stability; certainly it provided the Vietnamese the means to procure the essentials such as finances, logistics, etc. Introduction of U.S. Special Forces did not necessarily improve the lot of Vietnamese Special Forces, it provided an assured means of having directives carried out, with or without the Vietnamese Special Forces. The Vietnamese Special Forces is not yet capable of operating independently of the U.S. Special Forces—much experience and learning must yet be acquired by them. There is no instance in which an RVN Special Forces detachment has demonstrated a capability to perform the basic mission by itself. In every situation, except specialized combat intelligence missions, the effectiveness of the Vietnamese Special Forces was directly proportionate to the effectiveness of the U.S. advisors. U.S. Special Forces personnel have been more successful dealing directly with the CIDG Strike Force who preferred the more direct association with U.S. personnel. In such instances, Vietnamese Special Forces did little to win the respect and admiration of the Strike Force—either because of their superior attitude, unwillingness to "rub shoulders" or because they simply did not care since the American detachment was present and doing all that was necessary—this attitude only further alienated the Vietnamese Special Forces from the Strike Force. (This alienation of the Vietnamese is especially noticeable in areas that are predominantly Montagnard.)

(C) Col. John H. Spears, commander of the 5th Special Forces Group from July 1964 through June 1965, substantiates Colonel Leonard's findings:

During my assessment there stood out one general but quite significant fact—the Vietnamese Special Forces lacked professional competence. Fortunately my predecessor had also noted this deficiency and initiated corrective action which I supported vigorously. The answer lay in schooling, but first an understanding of the magnitude of the programs is necessary.

The VNSF under the Diem regime was a type of Praetorian Guard, arrogant, poorly trained, privileged, and separate from the other segments of the RVNAF. As a military unit, it was answerable only to the President through the Presidential Survey Office.

After the November 1963 coup which deposed President Diem, the Vietnamese Special Forces were reorganized and given new

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missions. One of the assigned missions was the support of the CIDG Program by providing officers and enlisted leadership. Many U.S. Special Forces officers were faced with the problems inherent in dealing with VNSF counterparts who were incompetent both as tacticians and administrators for what amounted to a battalion of CIDG forces in each camp. This lack of leadership ability and lack of confidence in their own abilities to surmount the numerous problems attendant to the running of a CIDG camp, led many VNSF officers to "turn over" all aspects of command to their U.S. counterparts. In many cases the U.S. Special Forces officer only filled a power vacuum. This situation could not be condoned, for our intention was then and is now to improve the quality of the Armed Forces of the RVN so that they in turn can help themselves. The quality of the VNSF personnel, both officer and enlisted, had to be improved.⁶

(S) As it developed, the CIDG program was carried on separately from the ARVN chain of command, with U.S. Army Special Forces in actual if not nominal command and control at most of the camps. Close U.S. Army relations with the Montagnards bred a natural sympathy with their aspirations, even when the total basis for these was not fully known or understood. A further complication, no doubt inherent in the situation, was an increased suspicion and distrust between Montagnards and Vietnamese and the development of tensions between U.S. military agencies and the Vietnamese government.

(C) Vietnamese Special Forces personnel have been suspected of taking "kickbacks" on Montagnard strike forces pay, and to have abused the Montagnards in other ways. Sympathies of the U.S. Army Special Forces generally have been with the Montagnards when such abuses have been suggested. Official Vietnamese reaction to the direction taken by the CIDG program is apparent in its tendency to blame the September 1964 revolt on "American programs" in the highlands.⁷

(S) On October 16, 1964, MACV, in a letter of instruction concerning the CIDG program, restated some of its basic missions, added new missions, and set up a new chain of command. The missions delineated were:

1. To advise, assist, train, and support the Vietnamese Special Forces in developing their capabilities in counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare.
2. In conjunction with the Vietnamese Special Forces, to establish bases along the western land border from which border surveillance and control could be conducted.
3. In conjunction with the Vietnamese Special Forces, to organize, train, and equip CIDG strike forces for operations against the secret war zones and major bases of the VC.
4. In conjunction with the Vietnamese Special Forces, to establish bases from which to disrupt Viet Cong infiltration along known corridors.
5. To plan, support, and participate in such operations as may be directed by COMUSMACV.
6. To assist in developing allegiance to the government of South Vietnam among the minority ethnic groups.

The letter gave the corps senior advisor responsibility for U.S. military personnel in the CIDG program within his assigned area and required him to direct coordination, liaison, and communications between the 5th Special Forces Group detachments and adjacent and support commands. Another letter dated January 18, 1965, developed the concept of using U.S. Army Special Forces "A" detachment commanders as subsector advisors. The concepts embodied in both of these letters more effectively put the U.S. Army Special Forces and the CIDG camps within the Vietnamese and U.S. military hierarchy, and afforded the Vietnamese military at least an apparent measure of control over the CIDG program.

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(S) Discussions with the U.S. Special Forces personnel in subsector and sector advisory roles and with U.S. military at the corps headquarters level, indicated satisfaction with the functioning of the new organizational structure. It afforded the U.S. Special Forces advisor to the CIDG or the subsector chief a measure of coordination that he had not been able to achieve previously. The same was true, of course, at the sector level. Discussions with a Vietnamese province chief and a Vietnamese commander of a CIDG camp also indicated that the new organizational concept was preferable to the older, more separatist one.

SITUATION UP TO MID-1965 (U)

(U) After the overthrow of the Diem regime, the Khanh and succeeding governments of South Vietnam developed policies favorable to the tribesmen. When Y Bham and Paul Nur were released from jail, both were given posts of responsibility and authority among their own people. The decrees prohibiting Montagnards from owning land were rescinded, and General Khanh announced a policy based on cohesiveness and equality between highlanders and lowlanders, support for cultural and economic parity between highlanders and lowlanders, and respect for the highlanders' customs and habits. To implement the new policy, Khanh promised the highlanders:

1. Free election of representatives to the national assembly and provincial and village civilian councils.
2. Assignment to positions in the executive agencies of the central government and in the local administrative agencies.
3. That highlander youths should be allowed to attend military academies for ARVN officers and noncommissioned officers.
4. Selection of highlander officers and noncommissioned officers to command units.
5. A students' center on the high plateau to help highlander servicemen's children prepare for military careers.
6. Official recognition of the land ownership of the Montagnards and abrogation of all contrary documents of the former regime, with replacement by documents clarifying and defining land registration.
7. Additional elementary and secondary classrooms as well as boarding schools in the highlands.
8. Additional scholarships to highlander students to help them continue their studies in secondary schools and universities.
9. The teaching of Montagnard dialects along with Vietnamese in the elementary schools.
10. That a system of courts based on respect of the highlanders' customs and habits would be studied.

(C) How little was done to implement the policies outlined by General Khanh is indicated by a list of demands presented by the civil servants of Kontum Province in October 1964, after the Montagnard revolt of September 1964. The Kontum demands, essentially repeating Khanh's promises, were:

1. A special commission, directed by a capable Montagnard attached to the premier's office, to settle all affairs concerning the Montagnard people.
2. This commission to have direct access to the premier, foreign organizations, and neighboring governments.
3. Montagnard people to have a separate administrative system in the Central Highlands.
4. Confiscated land or reimbursement therefor to be returned to the Montagnard people.
5. Montagnard troops to be commanded by Montagnard officers. Montagnards who have graduated from the National Institute of Administration to be district chiefs in the Central Highlands, assisted by Vietnamese.

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6. Replacement of or dismissal of Montagnard or Vietnamese officials who were oppressive or corrupt and enriched themselves on the "blood and tears" of the Montagnard people.
7. Replacement of deputy province chiefs for Montagnard affairs with young Montagnard graduates from the National Institute of Administration.
8. Building of military training centers for Montagnard youths in the Central Highlands.
9. Montagnard youths who have graduated from high school to be called on to attend military command school and other professional and specialized institutions.
10. Depending on the situation, "each local area" to have one or two Montagnard battalions commanded by Montagnard officers assisted by Vietnamese officers.
11. Montagnard high school graduates to be admitted to public works-engineering or medical courses.
12. Hospitals and dispensaries to be built for the poor Montagnard people without charge.

(C) As the result of the September revolt and the demands presented in Kontum and in Pleiku, a Montagnard, Lt. Col. Ya Ba, was appointed Chief of the Directorate of Montagnard Affairs in the Prime Minister's office. Additional Montagnards were appointed deputy province chiefs and deputy district chiefs for Montagnard affairs in the highlands. However, most observers agree that the Montagnard officials have neither real power nor the respect of their Vietnamese colleagues and their fellow tribesmen. According to one observer, "the directorate is in fact a sham and the Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office admitted to Ambassador Johnson that the Directorate was weak and ineffectual." In his view the real power in the directorate is Ya Ba's assistant, a Vietnamese major who is the contact with the Prime Minister's office. He further explains that 50 million piasters allocated to the budget for Montagnard welfare programs remained in the welfare establishment when the Directorate for Montagnard Affairs was established in the Prime Minister's office, leaving no funds for any overall programs the directorate might develop. The same observer and others familiar with the situation indicate that the Montagnards who have been appointed as deputy province chiefs and deputy district chiefs have not been able to get any of their recommendations acted upon.⁸

(C) Although the decrees of 1958 and 1959, prohibiting the Montagnards from owning land, have been withdrawn, and although General Khanh suggested a study of land tenure in the highlands, little has been done to give Montagnards title to their holdings. This problem is complex because of differences in agricultural practice among the tribes and variations in their customs of land ownership and use. As of April 1965, the Vietnamese government was still in the process of preparing a program for distribution of land titles to the Montagnards. During the summer of 1965, Premier Nguyen Cao Ky presented a few land titles to Rhade tribesmen in a ceremony at Ban Me Thuot: since then the author has received no information of additional land title distribution.

(C) Although orders have been issued to build more schools and to reduce entrance requirements for the Montagnards, implementation of these orders has been only partial. In March 1965 there were 35 Montagnard boarding schools in nine provinces. The government had plans to build more schools but had not yet definitely decided on locations.

(C) In the late spring of 1965, the government of South Vietnam decreed reorganization of Montagnard common-law courts to replace the Vietnamese judicial system that had been imposed upon the tribesmen. Gerald C. Hickey comments that while this legislation restores the legal status of native laws and tribunals it will structure the Montagnard judicial system along Vietnamese lines. He doubts that such a structure can be established, because of the type of societies found in the highlands and the lack of administrative experience. He sees danger of creating a legal mechanism that will be too complicated and unwieldy to function smoothly, and that the Montagnard villagers, like the Vietnamese, will prefer to settle their differences without going to outside authorities.⁹

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(C) It seems evident that the government of South Vietnam misunderstood or underestimated the effects of its policies toward the Montagnards. It is equally evident that those it adopted did little toward achieving Montagnard identification with the Vietnamese nation or gaining their full support against the Viet Cong. The FULRO revolt of December 1965 could not have occurred unless there was continuing Montagnard discontent with the policies and programs of the Vietnamese government. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon commented that:

GVN efforts to work out programs among the Montagnard population have been hampered by the normal defects of the GVN bureaucracy, the traditional Vietnamese contempt for the Montagnards, the war in the highlands, the low priority that Montagnard affairs have on the list of problems confronting the GVN and the competition for dominance in Montagnard affairs between Generals Nguyen Huu Co and Vinh Loc on the one hand and presidential assistants Bui Diem and Vo Duc Mai on the other.¹⁰

(C) Missionaries in the highlands contend that the Vietnamese are taking advantage of the Montagnards because of Montagnard ignorance in commercial affairs and also because they still consider the Montagnards to be no more than savages.

(C) In the CIDG camps, and among the U.S. Army Special Forces in the subsector and sector advisory roles, better relationships generally have developed between the Vietnamese and the U.S. Special Forces. For the most part the Americans now work through their Vietnamese counterparts as impartially as circumstances permit. In one CIDG camp it was revealed that U.S. Special Forces personnel had sold foodstuffs at cost to Vietnamese merchants in the area with the understanding that the Vietnamese would make no more than a 10% profit on resale to the Montagnards. When it was learned that the Vietnamese merchants were making over 100% profit, the U.S. Special Forces set up their own store in a 2 1/2-ton truck for the sale of foodstuffs to the Montagnards at cost. Vietnamese police provided some control by inspecting identification cards and marking them if a purchase had already been made. During discussion with the American personnel at this camp, the author asked whether the Vietnamese merchants objected to being removed from the transaction. The answer was emphatically negative. It was not possible to question the merchants directly, from whom it is conceivable that a different answer might have been forthcoming.

(C) Observation of the CIDG camps in the Central Highlands and discussions with U.S. Special Forces personnel indicated that unless there was an unusually competent Vietnamese camp commander, relations between the U.S. Army Special Forces personnel and their Vietnamese counterparts were apt to be strained. A comparison of observations about Vietnamese attitudes and activities toward the Montagnards by Special Forces personnel who returned from Vietnam during 1963 and those by Special Forces personnel who were serving in Vietnam between June and October 1965, would indicate a reduction in tensions between U.S. Army Special Forces and Vietnamese during the period.

(S) For the reasons discussed, U.S. military assistance to the Montagnards has resulted in some increase in tensions between the tribesmen and the Vietnamese and consequently between the Vietnamese and U.S. governments. The Montagnard-Vietnamese tensions were there long before U.S. assistance was even thought of, and their increase since initiation of that assistance has been not only a natural projection but a direct consequence of official Vietnamese policy toward the Montagnards. None of these outcomes was unpredictable and none could have derived solely from U.S. Army Special Forces indoctrination and training. Strained or exacerbated relations between the Vietnamese and U.S. governments, whether based on Vietnamese interpretation of U.S. Army activities or not, are outside the sphere of U.S. Army cognizance and cannot reasonably affect army activities except by direct policy guidance. In any event, it seems clearly evident that tensions between U.S. military and their Vietnamese counterparts in the field in the Central Highlands have been noticeably reduced and will continue to be so under current U.S. Army policies.

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(S) In Saigon and even among Vietnamese in the highlands it was widely believed that U.S. arms and training made possible the Rhade uprising of September 1964, and indeed, that the revolt was either U.S. inspired or supported. In view of the generally unsettled state of the country and the introduction of official measures which the Montagnard considered oppressive and punitive, a revolt of some magnitude was an almost foregone conclusion. That the Vietnamese should have sought a scapegoat is not surprising, nor is it remarkable that the U.S. Army should have provided a convenient one. And in fact the inevitable comparison between the well trained and sympathetic U.S. Special Forces sent among them and the inadequately trained and often arrogant ARVN teams in the same camps may well have led the Montagnards to expect active American support for their aspirations.

(S) An additional source of Vietnamese discontent appears to be their lack of control over the CIDG program. After the Rhade revolt, the United States issued a clear statement that any assistance to the Montagnards would be at the request of and through the Vietnamese government. The U.S. Army Special Forces command in Vietnam clearly indicated that its personnel were to act solely as advisors to their Vietnamese counterparts. More recent directives placed the CIDG program and Special Forces subsector and sector advisors in a chain of command more satisfactory to the Vietnamese military.

(S) This clarification and revision of policy by the United States seems to have contributed to reducing the suspicions of the Vietnamese toward American activity in the highlands and consequently some of the tensions between the U.S. and Vietnamese commands. This impression is substantiated by an embassy report which concludes that declining suspicions of U.S. activity among the Montagnards is indicated by a spontaneous Vietnamese request for assistance in the highlands and an official Vietnamese statement that the government would welcome any assistance from its friends in carrying out economic and social programs among the hill tribes.¹¹

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CHAPTER 3. THE CAMBODIANS (U)

(U) The delta region of South Vietnam was Cambodian prior to its occupation by the Vietnamese in the eighteenth century. After conquering the Kingdom of Champa in 1471, the Vietnamese continued to push south and west into the fertile Mekong Delta. By 1672 Saigon was in Vietnamese hands and, by 1757, Vietnamese had occupied the rest of the Delta and the Camau Peninsula.

(U) Many Cambodians evidently remained on the land they had occupied, now under the control of Vietnam, rather than return to territory under Cambodian control. As of 1962, it was estimated that some 500,000 ethnic Cambodians lived in South Vietnam. These Cambodians, or Khmer, are primarily Buddhist. They may be physically differentiated from ethnic Vietnamese in that they are slightly taller, somewhat darker, and a bit more heavily built than the Vietnamese.

(C) For the purposes of this report three groups of Cambodians were identified and will be discussed. These are: Neutral Cambodians, the Khmer Serei (Cambodian Free Movement) and the Khmer Kampuchea Krom (Cambodians of southern Cambodia).

NEUTRAL CAMBODIANS (U)

(C) The Neutral Cambodians appear to be unorganized either politically or militarily. Numerically they greatly outnumber the organized Cambodians and seem to have become integrated into Vietnamese society. Although there may be areas in which hamlets and villages are entirely Neutral Cambodian, limited personal observation and interviews indicate that they are more likely to live side by side with the Vietnamese. They engage in the same activities as the Vietnamese, live in similar housing, and are Buddhists. Most speak both Vietnamese and Cambodian, give every indication of accepting Vietnamese rather than Cambodian authority, and are not interested in migrating to Cambodia.

(C) Neutral Cambodians are also integrated into the strike forces of many CIDG camps. They are not given, nor do they require, special treatment. Their reaction to Vietnamese leadership and to U.S. advisory activity appears to be no different from that of the ethnic Vietnamese, and they have no reservations about fighting infiltrators from Cambodia. On the whole, they are no better or worse as soldiers than the Vietnamese, nor does there appear to be any difference between their motivation and the Vietnamese motivation to fight the Viet Cong.

(C) U.S. military activity does not appear to have had any special impact upon the Neutral Cambodians. No indications were found that tensions had existed between the various Vietnamese governments and Neutral Cambodians, nor is there any evidence that tensions have existed between U.S. military and the South Vietnamese government as a result of activity with Cambodians.

(S) Through the CIDG program many Neutral Cambodians are learning modern military tactics and the use of modern weapons, with no indication or suspicion that this knowledge will be used against the Vietnamese. No history of past organization or militancy has been discovered, and there is no indication that these Cambodians are being discriminated against or that they feel themselves to be the victims of discrimination. It is anticipated that continuation of present policies of the the South Vietnamese government and the U.S. military toward the Neutral Cambodians will tend to develop increased participation in the South Vietnamese government's programs and stronger identification with the Vietnamese national entity in the same manner that such activity would act upon ethnic Vietnamese.

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KHMER SEREI (CAMBODIAN FREE MOVEMENT) (U)

(C) A Khmer revolutionary movement has existed since 1935. Its major objective through 1953 was to obtain Cambodian freedom from French rule. A Khmer Serei bulletin of July 1964 indicates that the present organization had its origin in the earlier movement, and also points out that Son Ngoc Thanh, an exile from Cambodia, where he was Premier during the Japanese occupation, and the present leader of the Khmer Serei, was one of the most active leaders of the revolutionaries in Cambodia in 1940. The present organization, the Khmer Serei, was formed in 1958 to fight against communism and feudalism in Cambodia. Its stated objectives are to liberate the country from "feudal dictatorships and slavery," to develop a free and democratic Cambodia, and to work for "fraternal cooperation" between peoples.¹

(C) At this time the Khmer Serei is a strongly organized politico-military organization, composed of ethnic Cambodians of Vietnamese nationality with headquarters in Saigon. There are reports that Khmer Serei also exists in Thailand and in Cambodia. The Khmer Serei is considered a clandestine organization, though it makes daily radio broadcasts to Cambodia and from time to time distributes propaganda. It is suspected that it infiltrates small bodies of partisans into Cambodia from South Vietnam to conduct subversive operations.

(C) The Khmer Serei are interested in gaining as much military training and experience as they can, volunteering for service as strike forces in various CIDG camps. It has been reported that when the CIDG camp was being organized at Loc Ninh, fifteen kilometers from the Cambodian border, the U. S. Army Special Forces seeking manpower approached some Khmer Serei in the Loc Ninh area. These people were more than willing to join and offered to recruit additional Khmer Serei for the strike force. Evidently some Khmer Serei have been in the province of Binh Long since 1955 where they claim to have operated as guerrillas and regulars under the auspices of the South Vietnamese government but paid by the Hoa Hao.²

(C) Since the initial recruitment of Khmer Serei at the Loc Ninh CIDG camp, many companies of Khmer Serei have been recruited for strike force duty in Binh Long, An Giang, and Kien Phang Provinces. Except for the enrollment at Loc Ninh, recruiting appears to have been by Son Ngoc Thanh, the leader of the Khmer Serei, working through province chiefs. A large number of Khmer Serei also have been enlisted from Vinh Binh Province on the South China Sea. At one point recruiting was so intensive that it dangerously depleted the number of young men available for hamlet militia or as self-defense corps in the province.

(C) Although the Khmer Serei movement has been characterized as clandestine, U. S. military and civilian personnel report that Khmer Serei in the strike forces make no effort to conceal their membership. Not only do they willingly admit their affiliation but they are outspoken about their ultimate aim of overthrowing the Cambodian "Communist" government of Prince Sihanouk. Each Khmer Serei strike force member contributes a portion of his pay to headquarters at Saigon—ranging from 150 piasters for lowest ranking soldiers to 1,000 piasters for a company commander.³

(S) This information indicates a strong central organization and excellent discipline. The Khmer Serei take orders primarily from their own higher echelons and, while U. S. Army Special Forces have been able to exert a degree of authority, the limits of their authority have occasionally been made evident. Shortly after the first companies of Khmer Serei had been recruited for the Loc Ninh CIDG, two Khmer Serei members of the strike force were convicted of insubordination. Evidently news of this reached Saigon and Son Ngoc Thanh appeared at the camp and demanded the death penalty for the insubordinate soldiers. The commanding officer of the U. S. Army Special Forces in III Corps insisted that there be no interference from Saigon, and Son Ngoc Thanh acceded. On the other hand, there have been occasions at Loc Ninh when Khmer Serei strike forces have announced their intention to conduct operations against Cambodia. When the Vietnamese camp commander and the USASF advisors prohibited or advised against such activity, the strike forces declared that if the Americans would not lead them willingly, the Khmer Serei company commanders would lead and take the Americans

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along by force. Since there were some 300 Khmer Serei and only about 24 Vietnamese and U.S. Army personnel in the unit, the USASF detachment commander reported uneasiness and anxiety in the face of these threats.⁴

(S) There are no accurate figures as to the number of Cambodian members of the Khmer Serei in South Vietnam. The leader of a Khmer Serei company at Loc Ninh told a U.S. Embassy representative that the organization numbered some 800,000. Judging from the number of strike force personnel recruited from among the Khmer Serei, and from estimates by U.S. military and civilian personnel, it appears likely that no more than 50,000 to 70,000 Cambodians are members of the Khmer Serei.

(C) The goals of the Khmer Serei in Vietnam and their outspokenness appear to have contributed to the deterioration of Cambodian-South Vietnamese and Cambodian-U.S. relationships. In November 1963, Sihanouk cited Khmer Serei broadcasts to justify his anti-West shift in policy. The present government of Cambodia has accused the United States of training troops to overthrow Sihanouk, referring apparently to the Khmer Serei. The likelihood of border incidents which could embarrass both the Vietnamese and the U.S. governments and increase tensions between them and Cambodia prompted a redistribution of Khmer Serei companies farther from the Cambodian border. Khmer Serei companies were moved from Loc Ninh CIDG camp to Minh Thanh, Sui Da and Dong Xoi, starting in November 1964.

(C) The precise relationship between the Khmer Serei and the Vietnamese government is not entirely clear, there being at least one indication that Khmer Serei guerrilla units were operating in Binh Long Province in behalf of the South Vietnamese government. However, the fact that the Khmer Serei stated that they were being paid by the Hoa Hao would suggest that the South Vietnamese government wished to keep this relationship confused. A U.S. Army Special Forces memorandum of July 1, 1965, states "that Son Ngoc Thanh, a Cambodian holding a position in the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam (GRVN), Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam (RVN) . . . has been recruiting Vietnamese born Cambodians to form a unit to fight in Cambodia for the government of Viet Nam." Embassy files available to the author had no information that the leader of the Khmer Serei had any official position in the South Vietnamese government. Reports from the field, however, indicate at least unofficial government sanction, since Son Ngoc Thanh used Vietnamese military aircraft to visit CIDG camps in which Khmer Serei companies were stationed.

(C) The current aspirations of the Khmer Serei appear similar to its original objectives when it was organized in 1958. Its major goal is still to overthrow the Sihanouk government in Cambodia; this would require a well trained military organization and outside support. Another goal is to defeat the Viet Cong in Vietnam; this is a means to their ultimate objective. The training and experience that the Khmer Serei are obtaining as CIDG strike forces and in other elements of the South Vietnamese Army would certainly season them for any fight against the Sihanouk forces in Cambodia. Several informants have indicated that the Khmer Serei have tried to get Vietnamese or American support for their fight against Sihanouk, and that they feel that their participation in the fight against the Viet Cong will influence the South Vietnamese and U.S. governments on their behalf. An additional objective of the present Khmer Serei movement is to assist families of Cambodian soldiers who have been killed in the current war.

(S) The Khmer Serei are reported by their U.S. Army advisors to be an excellent, well-disciplined fighting force. They are credited with doing an outstanding job when the Viet Cong attacked the CIDG camps at Sui Da and Dong Xoi. Despite reports that the Khmer Serei conducted some guerrilla operations against the Viet Cong prior to 1961, there are no data to show that these activities were widespread or that the military organization was well developed. The eagerness with which Khmer Serei leaders recruited their members for strike force duty during and after 1961 indicates that the leaders recognize that the membership needs military training and experience. This they have been given, and are getting, as strike forces in the various CIDG camps. There are even suspicions among U.S. personnel that the Khmer Serei strike forces have been stealing and storing weapons and ammunition for a possible foray against the Sihanouk government.

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(S) Because the Khmer Serei have conducted themselves so well under fire, they have been sought after for the CIDG strike forces, and have been praised by the American advisors to the CIDG camps. This may give the Khmer Serei the false impression that the U.S. military is behind their fight against the Sihanouk government.

(S) The Khmer Serei may, on the other hand, believe that they are ready to attack the Sihanouk government without formal outside support. The resulting border incidents would be, at least, politically embarrassing for the government of South Vietnam and, at most, could induce an invasion of the delta region of South Vietnam by Cambodian forces. Because the Khmer Serei are so outspoken about their goals and their organization, they may also be outspoken as to what they believe to be their source of support if they are captured in Cambodia. Should they believe that the U.S. Government is supporting them and state this to the Cambodians during interrogation, it could prove politically embarrassing to the United States.

(S) The Khmer Serei seem to have, at least as an internal factor, the unofficial blessings of the South Vietnamese government. The fact that Son Ngoc Thanh travels about in aircraft belonging to the Vietnamese armed forces and is given VIP treatment in the provinces would suggest this unofficial sanction. Therefore, there is no reason to suspect that U.S. military activity with the Khmer Serei has in any way developed tensions between the Khmer Serei and the South Vietnamese government or between the government and MACV.

KHMER KAMPUCHEA KROM (CAMBODIANS OF SOUTHERN CAMBODIA) (U)

(C) Reliable information about the Khmer Kampuchea Krom (KKK) is difficult to obtain. According to one report the KKK were organized in 1960, with the support of the Sihanouk government in Cambodia, to neutralize the Khmer Serei. One Ay Say, now living in Soc Trang, is said to have organized the KKK and to have been the first commander of Battalion 220 of the KKK.⁵

(C) Such an organization supposedly would be sympathetic to the Viet Cong, since Sihanouk seems to lean toward the Chinese Communists and the North Vietnamese. KKK support of the VC is indicated by a manifesto which was directed to the Cambodians, the Cham, the Montagnards, and the Vietnamese, dated May 8, 1964, and signed by a company commander of "Khmer Kampuchea Kraum Movement." The manifesto invites the addressees to join the KKK in liberating all the people from "the Imperialist Saigon puppet government," and asks the members of the Free Cambodian Movement (Khmer Serei), who are identified as "slaves" to the Saigon government, to come back to the "right way, which is our Khmer Kampuchea Kraum Movement . . ."

(C) U.S. personnel report indications that the KKK originally received support from the Sihanouk government of Cambodia. Later the support is believed to have lessened because of problems between Sihanouk and the Viet Cong. Since then the KKK have been a political pawn between Sihanouk's government and the VC. The KKK then turned into bandits, perhaps because of disenchantment with their sponsor.

(C) The South Vietnamese government and some U.S. personnel feel that the KKK have always been bandits, and that they would fight for or against anybody—Cambodian, Viet Cong, or Vietnamese—depending on how much money was involved.

(C) According to a provincial report on Cambodian activities in Binh Long Province by a member of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, there have been frequent border crossings by armed bands, presumably of KKK, from Cambodia into the Loc Ninh area of Vietnam. The main activities of these bands appear to be kidnaping and assassination. On May 23, 1965, fourteen Montagnards were abducted from a hamlet north of Loc Ninh. Early in June 1965, a rich Chinese was also kidnaped. The province report states that once ransom is paid, the KKK return their victims.⁶ This would appear to be plain banditry, with the added complication that the bandits use Cambodia as an operating base and sanctuary.

(C) In July 1965, fourteen Cambodians "surrendered" to the Vietnamese district chief at Tri Ton. They were identified as Khmer Kampuchea Krom and also as members of the "White

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Scarf Gang," whose leader is one Chau Uc. When this small party was welcomed by the Vietnamese, 120 more members "surrendered" at Tri Ton.

(C) Chau Uc reported that there were about 600 additional men under arms in the Seven Mountain area. The district chief at Tri Ton requested Chau Uc to persuade these, through loudspeaker broadcasts from a helicopter, to give themselves up at Tri Ton. Chau Uc made his broadcasts and, upon his return to Tri Ton, the area to which he had appealed was shelled by Vietnamese artillery. The Vietnamese claimed that the shelling was a mistake and induced Chau Uc the next day to broadcast a request for the armed party to assemble at a stipulated place. Again, after his broadcast, the area designated as the assembly point was shelled by the Vietnamese. The 600 men, led by Chau Hien, lost confidence in Chau Uc and the Tri Ton district chief and gave themselves up to the U.S. Army Special Forces at the CIDG camp at Tinh Bien.¹

(C) Both parties left their arms and their families in the Seven Mountain area when they surrendered. Both declared that they wished to become part of the armed forces of South Vietnam and return to the Seven Mountain area to fight the Viet Cong. On August 13, 1965, Chau Uc's 134 Cambodians were designated a company in the regional forces of Chau Doc Province and he was given command in a ceremony presided over by Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu. However, it was not until late in December 1965 that Chau Hien and his 600 men were given official status, being organized as the strike force for a new CIDG camp near Tinh Bien close to the Cambodian border and the Seven Mountain area.

(C) Chau Hien told the author that his followers had organized in 1960 to defend their hamlets against Viet Cong harassment, but had no weapons and resisted the Viet Cong with shovels and other farm implements. Later they captured weapons and ammunition from the Viet Cong and formed platoons. Chau Hien claims that all of his weapons and ammunition have been captured from the Viet Cong. He maintains that his people wish to continue living in South Vietnam as Vietnamese nationals and that they would fight Viet Cong, Communist Cambodians, or any other Cambodian troops who crossed the Vietnamese border. Chau Hien was speaking for his party only; he did not indicate that Chau Uc's group organized in the same fashion and, in fact, tended to avoid references to it.

(C) U.S. Army personnel at Tinh Bien tend to believe Chau Hien's story. They have spoken with his followers and with religious leaders in the villages in the Seven Mountain area. Their information tends to substantiate the Chau Hien version.

(S) Some U.S. Army sector advisors in Chau Doc have a different version. They maintain that when the first fourteen Cambodians turned themselves in at Tri Ton a Cambodian radio broadcast, which was monitored, berated them for defecting and requested Chau Uc to return to Cambodia for instructions. Other information strongly suggests that Chau Uc had left South Vietnam to visit Cambodia and then returned to head the entire force in the Seven Mountain area. During Chau Uc's absence Chau Hien gained power, and the force split when Chau Uc returned.

(C) Up to December 1965 (the data cutoff date), there has been no substantiation of either version of the initial organization or source of support for the Cambodians who turned themselves in at Tri Ton and Tinh Bien. Most of the aspirations of the Cambodians who turned themselves in from the Seven Mountain area have in effect been realized, if the facts are as stated by Chau Hien. Both factions said they wanted to be part of the Vietnamese armed forces and fight against the Viet Cong in their home area. Chau Hien indicated that his people wanted to continue "the soldier's life" even after the war with the Viet Cong was over.

(C) On the other hand, if they are getting support from Cambodia, and in reality are sympathetic to the Viet Cong, their aspirations would be to neutralize the Khmer Serei, to overthrow the "imperialistic Saigon government," and perhaps return several Vietnamese delta provinces to Cambodian control.

(S) Although the South Vietnamese government assume prime responsibility for any future difficulties with the KKK when it welcomed both factions into its military and paramilitary

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forces, the uncertainties surrounding these people place U.S. military advisors in a delicate position. They recognize this position, as many of them have made clear to the author, and realize that it can be responded to only on the basis of established principles applied to actual eventualities. Any diplomatic or policy upheavals resulting from it are the province of policy-making authority.

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CHAPTER 4. THE RELIGIOUS SECTS (U)

(U) Two important minority religious sects in South Vietnam are the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai. The membership of the Hoa Hao has been estimated at 2,000,000 and is composed of ethnic Vietnamese. The Cao Dai also estimate their membership at 2,000,000, but this is considered by most authorities to be an exaggeration. Membership appears to be primarily ethnic Vietnamese and both sects are concentrated in the delta region of South Vietnam, the Hoa Hao principally in the provinces under IV Corps while the majority of the Cao Dai are somewhat more dispersed among provinces in both III and IV Corps. (See frontispiece.)

HOA HAO (U)

(FOUO) The Hoa Hao religion was founded less than 30 years ago by Huynh Phu So who lived in the village of Hoa Hao, Chau Doc Province. This religion, or sect, is a simplified or reformed version of Hinayana Buddhism. It attracted a large following within a comparatively short time; its growth appears to be related both to the personality of the founder and to some of the basic tenets of the religion.

(FOUO) Huynh Phu So taught that one did not need pagodas or priests for the proper practice of religion and stressed the importance of a direct relationship between the individual and Buddha. The ethical principles underlying the Hoa Hao religion are to honor one's parents, love one's country, and respect Buddhism.

(FOUO) The large following attracted by the new religion from 1939 to 1941 gave deep concern to the French, who apparently feared that the Hoa Hao might develop an alliance with the Japanese invaders. To forestall such a possibility the French held Huynh Phu So in an asylum for almost a year. The Hoa Hao reaction was what the French had hoped to prevent: They promptly allied themselves with the Japanese, who trained and equipped a Hoa Hao army. It appears, however, that the Hoa Hao army conducted few if any military actions against the French, using their newly acquired might principally to terrorize the population of Chau Doc and neighboring provinces by imposing taxes, extorting money, and seizing land. In fact, they forced many non-Hoa Hao to leave the area.

(FOUO) After the Japanese withdrew, the Viet Minh, who controlled a large part of Vietnam, courted the allegiance of the Hoa Hao, but the latter refused to give up their independence or their army. When the French returned, the Viet Minh reconciled any differences with the Hoa Hao, so as to ensure resistance to the French in the provinces under Hoa Hao control. The resulting anti-French coalition was called "The Rally of Nationalist Forces."

(FOUO) Under this coalition the Viet Minh again attempted to gain control of the Hoa Hao army, but Huynh Phu So resisted and formed his own political party—Democratic Socialists—which was both anti-Communist and anti-French. Apparently in the hope of forcing an alliance, or in reprisal, the Viet Minh assassinated Huynh Phu So, resulting both in the rise of Tran Van Soai to leadership and a Hoa Hao alliance with the French against the Viet Minh. However, the unity of the Hoa Hao military organization broke down when the leadership of General Soai was challenged by three other generals, Le Quang Vinh (also known as Ba Cut), Lam Thanh Nguyen, and Nguyen Giac Ngo. The result was a splitting of the Hoa Hao into four independent factions, a division that continued for eight years, until the French left Vietnam in 1955.

(FOUO) With the Diem government's rise to power in South Vietnam a new alignment of Hoa Hao military forces came into being. Generals Ngo and Nguyen aligned themselves with the government, whereas generals Soai and Vinh, whose combined following included the greater part of the Hoa Hao forces, chose to oppose Diem. The military forces of the Republic of Vietnam vanquished the dissident elements by April 1956, and during the Diem regime the Hoa Hao suffered severe restrictions. For example, in 1960 none of the officials of My Thuan village or of the district were Hoa Hao, and the Hoa Hao required express permission from

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higher authority to gather together for any ceremony, including the practice of their religion. At the same time, the Hoa Hao were able to join "the Civil Guard and other military and paramilitary units," although evidently restricted from reorganizing their own army.¹ The fortunes of the Hoa Hao changed after the overthrow of Diem in November 1963. The stringent political and religious restrictions were lifted, and they seem to have initiated overt efforts to reorganize.

(FOUO) The Hoa Hao developed a religious hierarchy based on a committee structure that reached all levels of its membership, and formal organization was complete with the election of its highest body, the central executive committee, in November 1964. The Hoa Hao claim that the hierarchy of committees is purely a religious body, an assertion made to the author by Major Phoi, Vietnamese commander of the CIDG camp in Chau Doc Province, and an influential member of the Hoa Hao. The religious organizational structure could, however, be utilized readily to organize the membership for other activities. One observer considers it highly probable that the committees will attempt to broaden their scope in view of the secular interests of many members of the central executive committee and the announced desire that the Hoa Hao be represented by a unified political party.²

(FOUO) The Hoa Hao have evidently been pressing for official recognition of their religion since the Diem government fell. On July 13, 1965, an official decree conferred legal status on the Hoa Hao, an act confirmed by Premier Nguyen Cao Ky on August 12 in a ceremony at Hoa Hao village. The new legal status gave the Hoa Hao "official freedom of religion," as Major Phoi put it, which appears to be very important to them.

(FOUO) The Hoa Hao seem to have gained some political influence since November 1963, mainly through the appointment of Hoa Hao as district and province officials rather than as a unified political party. "In October 1964 the various [Hoa Hao] political factions met in Long Xuyen and voted to unite under one Social Democratic Party . . ." In August 1965 U.S. military and civilian personnel indicated that the Hoa Hao had made little, if any, progress in political unity, though they did not feel that political unification was precluded for the future.³

(FOUO) There is some question as to how political unity might be used by the Hoa Hao. One U.S. civilian contends that the leaders want eventually to gain control of some geographical area, so that they can reorganize their army and achieve autonomy. Other U.S. personnel do not go as far. In their judgment the Hoa Hao would like to have administrative and political authority over a province but continue as an integral part of Vietnam. Major Phoi insists that the Hoa Hao have no political aspirations beyond religious freedom and equality of treatment, and that they want to be part of Vietnam and help make it a strong nation.

CAO DAI (U)

(U) Cao Daiism is an amalgam of several religions, its principles deriving chiefly from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The hierarchical structure is modeled after the Roman Catholic Church and the essential rituals are taken from Vietnamese spirit worship. The large number and wide variety of saints worshiped by the Cao Dai include Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tse, Christ, Moses, Joan of Arc, Sun Yat Sen, Admiral Duclos, and Victor Hugo.

(U) The movement which culminated in the official establishment of the religion on October 7, 1926, was initiated when a spirit, calling itself Cao Dai, communicated during a séance in 1919 with Ngo Van Chieu, a civil servant in the colonial administration on Phu Quoc Island. Although Chieu made contact with Cao Dai during subsequent séances, the movement did not really develop until after his transfer to Saigon.

(U) Spiritualism was evidently popular in Vietnam and Ngo Van Chieu continued to hold séances with a number of fellow civil servants. The spirit communicated with them at several of the séances, instructing them to depict him as "a large eye emitting bright rays of light, and it also advised them to use the beaked basket which, . . . spells out the spirit message."⁴ Impetus and direction were apparently given to the budding movement in 1925 when the Cao

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Dai spirit requested establishment of a new religion. This information was widely circulated, others declared that the spirit had communicated with them, and the movement gained adherents.

(U) During one of the many séances that were being held in the Saigon-Cholon area the Cao Dai spirit is reported to have directed Le Van Trung to join the new religious movement. The communication evidently had a strong impact on Trung. He joined with Chieu, took an active part in fostering the religion, and completely changed his style of life. Trung, a Cholon businessman, had been immersed in material gain and sensual pleasure, but, after joining the Cao Dai movement, he became a model of morality and ultimately gave all his time to the new religion. In 1926, and prior to the formal declaration of the movement's existence, Le Van Trung took over leadership of the Cao Dai religion from Ngo Van Chieu.

(U) Within the next four years Cao Daim greatly increased its membership and developed its theological principles and organizational structure, based upon instructions from the Cao Dai spirit. Land was purchased in Tay Ninh Province which became the "Holy See," and upon which an unusual temple was later completed. During this same period schisms developed within the leadership. Hickey reports that the divisions were the result of personal differences rather than disputes over doctrine. Many of the principals left the Holy See at Tay Ninh, gained their own followings, and established their own sects. Hickey writes that eleven sects developed prior to World War II, and that eight still exist.

(U) As Cao Daim grew and developed it nurtured the seeds of nationalism. It is reported that this latent nationalism began to manifest itself as anti-French propaganda cloaked in religious pronouncements; later, during World War II, the propaganda became more open and forceful. The Holy See at Tay Ninh was closed by the French and some months later, Pham Cong Tac, who had become the Cao Dai leader, was exiled. The Cao Dai retaliated through an active alliance with the Japanese, whom they assisted with a 3,000-man army, trained and equipped by the Japanese.

(U) At the end of World War II the Cao Dai joined forces with the Viet Minh. The French indicated that Tac would be returned if the Cao Dai gave up their resistance and a truce was patched together. For a time, the Cao Dai remained neutral despite Viet Minh efforts to get them to rejoin the fight against the French. When persuasion failed, the Viet Minh attempted to annihilate the sect. This attempt was not successful and provoked such antagonism toward the Viet Minh that the Cao Dai moved to support the French. Under terms of a treaty, negotiated in 1947, they were to actively support the French and the French were to provide military assistance to the Cao Dai. The Cao Dai were able to develop a military academy and maintain an army some 15,000 strong. They are reported to have used their army principally to control and exploit large geographic areas, thus rendering the French much less assistance against the Viet Minh than might have been anticipated.

(U) Toward the end of the Indochinese War the Cao Dai leadership apparently realized that the Viet Minh might win and again sought to promote an image of neutrality. In fact the Cao Dai leader, Tac, attempted to assume the role of mediator just before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Whatever political influence the Cao Dai may have had was considerably reduced when French patronage ceased after the Geneva accords.

(U) When Diem came to power both the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao were able to exert sufficient political pressure to gain some representation in the new government. However, Diem came to feel that the sects, with their own armies, presented a threat to his regime, especially when the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao demanded in concert that Diem become merely one member of an executive council in which the sects would also be represented. Diem took military action against the sects, and they were soundly defeated by the end of 1955, many of the Cao Dai leadership going into voluntary exile. The military and political activities of the Hoa Hao also were suppressed during the Diem regime.

CURRENT SITUATION (U)

(C) After the fall of the Diem government, the political climate apparently favored the Cao Dai, since many of its leaders returned to South Vietnam, where they have continued to struggle

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among themselves for power within the hierarchy, dividing the membership and vitiating any influence the sect might exert. In early 1965, five rather distinct factions were identifiable, and late in the summer of 1965 the Cao Dai hierarchy was reported to be still torn by internal political quarrels. It is anticipated that factionalism will continue to vitiate any potential political strength.

(C) On the other hand, individuals who profess Cao Daism have been appointed to positions in the government of South Vietnam. Le Van Tat, a former Cao Dai general who opposed Diem and returned to Vietnam from "voluntary" exile in Cambodia after Diem's fall, was appointed province chief of Tay Ninh in February 1964. Two Cao Dai served on the high national council and a number are serving as district chiefs. Major Trung, a Cao Dai who had recently replaced Tat as the Tay Ninh province chief, indicated in 1965 that the kind of political recognition the Cao Dai had desired was to have Cao Dai in high political positions, a goal which he felt had been achieved.

(C) The governments which followed Diem permitted the Cao Dai to organize military units within the government's military-paramilitary structure. General Tat, as province chief in Tay Ninh, requested and was given permission to organize Cao Dai regional force companies. It is reported that as of early 1965 there were fifteen Cao Dai regional force companies serving in Tay Ninh and two other delta provinces. Cao Dai platoons serve in the popular forces and have been recruited into the CIDG program. It seems that the Cao Dai are not interested in reorganizing their own army. Maj. Ho Duc Trung, Tay Ninh province chief, told the author that his coreligionists wanted to fight within the South Vietnamese structure rather than have a separate armed force. That the Cao Dai are apparently willing ". . . to serve under, and with, non-members of the faith" is, perhaps, some substantiation of Major Trung's opinion. On the other hand, a U.S. Army officer advising in Tay Ninh indicated that General Tat had problems recruiting Cao Dai, and that there were no Cao Dai CIDG camps in Tay Ninh as of August 1965. It may be that recruiting problems, possibly associated with internal quarrels, are a partial explanation of the present apparent lack of interest in an autonomous armed force.

(C) The Cao Dai regained legal status and official recognition as a religion on July 13, 1965, by decree of the Ky government. A ceremony was held at the Holy See during which Nguyen Cao Ky officially recognized the new status of the Cao Dai. Both the province chief and the U.S. officer felt that such recognition and status were quite important for the Cao Dai, but a non-Cao Dai province official felt it was of somewhat minor importance to them relative to political recognition.⁶

(C) Effects of U.S. military activity on the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, insofar as these effects can be observed, have been almost altogether positive. As already noted, units have been organized and trained among the members of both sects in the areas they control or where they predominate numerically. That these effects have not been uniform also has been noted: the Hoa Hao in general perform well, while desertion and disinterest among the Cao Dai have minimized their usefulness.

(C) These differences may be attributed, at least in part, to the greater militancy of the Hoa Hao, their better organization, and their relative solidarity. The Cao Dai have been fragmented by dissidence among their leaders, and as a result lack the cohesion that would tend to identify them with the central government.

(C) Evidence is entirely lacking that U.S. training of troop units among these sects has led to tensions between them and the government at Saigon or between the Saigon government and that of the United States. Almost without exception the leaders and the membership of the sects appear to have responded directly and in kind to the attitude and behavior toward them of the government of South Vietnam. When they have been treated as enemies, they have reacted as enemies; treated as Vietnamese, they generally have responded as Vietnamese.

(C) In August 1965 the author visited a CIDG camp into which an experimental Vietnamese motivational training team, itself trained in Saigon under auspices of JUSPAO (USIS), had just

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been introduced. It was not possible, because of the brief period of its operations, to observe what effect this team might have had on the Hoa Hao making up the personnel of the camp strike force and popular force. But it was observed that excellent relations existed between U. S. Army Special Forces personnel and their Vietnamese counterparts, apparently (although not specifically confirmed) because of close cooperation along the military and political chains of command and the overt assignment of responsibility and authority to South Vietnamese officials.

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CHAPTER 5. SUMMATION (U)

(FOUO) A review of the data discussed in the preceding chapters suggests that the basic principles underlying U.S. Army doctrine for developing indigenous counterinsurgency forces in South Vietnam have been sound. Where application of these principles has failed or achieved less than optimum success, the negative factor apparently has been one associated with local conditions, perhaps of long standing.

(C) Concrete evidence of success in the Vietnam program is less readily demonstrable than is evidence of limited failure. This is partly because successes are apt to be local and unspectacular, while failure is vivid and usually widely known. Thus, a great many instances of well-trained and effective defense and strike forces may go unnoticed in the glare of one defection or one revolt. That defections and revolts have occurred is undeniable, but the evidence tends to indicate that these have been despite U.S. Army assistance rather than because of it.

(C) The tasks undertaken by the U.S. Army in South Vietnam have been without specific precedent and, in the light of possible future commitments, their lessons are more than ordinarily valuable. In South Vietnam the U.S. Army must conduct its advisory and training missions not only in the face of skilled and determined guerrilla operations externally sponsored and supported, but in the midst of ethnic, political, religious, and economic discontent. The first of these hazards presents a problem requiring a military solution; the second a problem which may be exacerbated by the solutions to the first.

(S) That a common solution to both problems rests in a politico-military operation which strengthens the central government while opposing insurgent armed action has been recognized by the U.S. Army. The MACV letter of instruction of October 16, 1964 (see p. 19), reiterates this principle in its reminders that certain actions are to be taken "in conjunction with the Vietnamese Special Forces." The principle itself is succinctly stated in paragraph 6 of the letter:

(S) "Assist in developing an allegiance to the government of Viet Nam among the minority ethnic groups."

(S) This injunction, as the author's research demonstrates, has been followed by U.S. Army Special Forces units in the field as far as conditions have permitted. There have been instances in which Vietnamese representatives or commanders have been ill-trained, incompetent, or unwilling to assume authority. In those cases it has usually been necessary for their American counterparts to take over their duties, though the evidence tends to indicate that in such cases U.S. personnel have taken steps to maintain the appearance of working through the Vietnamese.

(S) A major negative effect of USASF operations among ethnic factions or religious sects in South Vietnam has been the occasional disquiet they have generated within the government. In the circumstances this is hardly a startling phenomenon, and certainly it is one whose resolution lies within the realm of national policy. That is to say, the U.S. Army performs its allotted function as the instrument of policy, fully cognizant of the possible side effects of its activities and exerting its best efforts to avoid or minimize these side effects. But when they nevertheless occur, the U.S. Army can only respond to policy guidance based on considerations outside its own limited sphere of decision.

(S) The record seems clear that, in every major instance in which such side effects have occurred, the true cause has not been an act or policy of the U.S. Army, but longstanding local animosities or actions of the South Vietnamese government. In some cases the lack of discipline and habitual misbehavior of Vietnamese troops or the venality of Vietnamese officials has contributed to dissidence and unrest. There have been instances in which prompt and decisive action by U.S. Army Special Forces personnel has halted or averted violent acts against Vietnamese authority. In any event, where animosities did not already exist, U.S.

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Special Forces activity does not appear to have aroused them and, where they did exist, there is no clear evidence that USASF activities aggravated them or stimulated any actions not likely to occur anyway.

(C) That the several governments of Vietnam which have followed that of Ngo Dinh Diem since 1963 have recognized, in greater or lesser degree, their own responsibilities for maintaining internal harmony is implicit in the record. Also manifest is the baneful effect of promises which are not or cannot be kept. The government of Nguyen Cao Ky, especially through the personal involvement of Ky himself in measures to reassure many of the minorities, has done much to ease tensions. Should these measures continue, and palpable social, political, and economic advantages accrue to hitherto neglected elements of the population, much of the extra-military burden on U.S. Army forces in South Vietnam should be alleviated.

(C) In addition to the side effects already discussed, this extra-military burden includes civic action and psychological warfare. Civic action, as has been noted, is an inevitable military command function, historically applied as the situation required. In wars of pacification and the modern version of counterinsurgency, every act of every officer and soldier in and toward the civilian population is an act of psychological warfare. That these acts should tend toward the allaying of fear and suspicion and the gaining of confidence and support goes without saying. The positive and direct application of psychological warfare measures, as a collateral function of military effort, often tends to at least border on the ridiculous, unless conducted with an understanding of the thought processes and the cherished values of the population addressed. If practice sometimes falls short of theory, the remedy appears to lie in the application of psychological warfare measures directly to, rather than collaterally with, the requirements and objectives of the military operation.

(U) Since the research in preparation for this study ended and writing began, two important changes have taken place in the military situation in South Vietnam. (1) Since late 1965 heavy commitments of U.S. land forces to Vietnam and engagement of these forces in battle have altered the scale but not the policy of U.S. support of the South Vietnamese government. (2) In the fall of 1966 Vietnamese Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Nguyen Huu Co announced that in 1967 a search-and-destroy military mission would be undertaken by U.S. and associated forces, while the ARVN would be employed in the pacification of areas returned to government control.

(FOUO) While research directed specifically to the probable effects of these developments has not been possible, the investigation underlying this paper suggests no major change in the principles and policies now applied by the U.S. Army Special Forces in South Vietnam. Advice to ARVN commanders in the pacification role should impose no new demands on them. U.S. Army combat forces in the field might well profit by the attachment to them of USASF units cognizant of the civic action requirements of the peculiar situation in South Vietnam. In any case, no doctrinal changes appear requisite.

(C) Throughout the research for and preparation of this study, one consideration has been increasingly apparent: That is the great amount and scope of research already accomplished in the area. Not only have numerous well-qualified research organizations sent individuals and teams into Southeast Asia, and made their findings available, but U.S. Army officers have submitted many reports on their activities among the Vietnamese minorities. Of these latter, the debriefing reports of Col. Theodore Leonard, commanding U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam November 1963-July 1964, and Col. John H. Spears, who held the same command July 1964-June 1965, are outstanding.

(FOUO) Colonel Spears offers an especially perceptive review and analysis of the particular problems discussed in this paper. It is unnecessary to go much beyond the information and conclusions in Colonel Spears' report for a basis upon which to form doctrine for operations of the type now being carried out in Vietnam. The extent to which these two debriefing reports have been used in the formulation or refinement of doctrine is not known to the present author.

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(FOUO) In addition to the proliferation of research and experience within the U.S. military, there are many similar and, to some extent, duplicate reports from other U.S. Government agencies. The process of research for this study failed to reveal any concerted effort to bring together the results of these endeavors or to apply them to general solution of complex problems, although some lateral exchange of information, on the initiative of individuals in the field, does exist.

(FOUO) If research for this study has clearly demonstrated any single requirement, it has been the need for collation, evaluation, and use of the multiplicity of information available not only in the products of officially sponsored research but in the open literature. It appears likely that the value of further research in the field covered here would be enhanced if information already available in many government agencies as well as in the U.S. Army itself were sufficiently collated and evaluated to indicate any important gaps that may remain.

(FOUO) There is no doubt that any situation as fluid as the worldwide political and military instability now confronting the United States will continue to present new or apparently new problems. Until data already accumulated have been pulled together, evaluated, and written into policy or doctrine, it will be difficult, and often impossible, to determine which problems in a fluid situation are genuinely new and which have already been studied and perhaps solved in some other guise.

CONCLUSIONS (U)

(C) 1. The principles underlying U.S. Army Special Forces operations among minorities in South Vietnam, and the current doctrines based upon them, are sound. Inconsistencies in application of these principles in the field are due principally to imprecise enunciation of doctrine or occasionally to individual shortcomings.

(C) 2. Undesirable side effects from USASF activities with minorities will be inevitable in any politically and economically unstable society. To the extent that these side effects disturb relations between the United States and the host government, decisions are required at those levels of government that give policy guidance to the U.S. Army.

(C) 3. In any situation of externally controlled and directed insurgency the primary factor in gaining the allegiance of citizens physically and emotionally isolated from their own government is confidence in the ability of that government to protect them from insurgent retaliation. The act of "pacification," provided government forces maintain control of affected areas, is one means of gaining confidence. But even this measure will fail if the protecting troops prey on or otherwise offend local civilians, a fact already recognized by the U.S. Army and met in its training programs.

(FOUO) 4. Any action by the U.S. Army or its specially trained detachments is limited in area by the availability of forces, and in scope by considerations of national policy. Within the limits of its own strength and doctrine, representative elements of the U.S. Army have performed a difficult task well in South Vietnam. Questions other than local and military raised by its normal and necessary activities under terms of its assignment are matters requiring national policy decision and guidance.

(FOUO) 5. Collation and evaluation of the results of research already accomplished in the area of the U.S. Army's role in insurgency and counterinsurgency should serve to establish the limits of current knowledge and to reveal gaps requiring further study. Material for such an evaluation is available not only within the U.S. Army but in other military services and civilian agencies dealing with aspects of insurgency.

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FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹Address of Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, before the American Friends of Vietnam, June 1, 1956. Department of State Press Release No. 289, May 31, 1956.

²For a full chronology of events in Vietnam, 1948-65, see U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965.) Events prior to 1948 are summarized from Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, Chapters 4 and 5 (New York: Praeger, 1964).

³For a highly detailed account of U.S. Army civil affairs experience over 178 years, see William E. Daugherty and Marshall Andrews, A Review of U.S. Historical Experience with Civil Affairs, 1776-1954, ORO-TP-29 (Bethesda, Md.: Operations Research Office, 1961).

CHAPTER 2

¹This estimate was supported by data derived in personal interviews with Dr. Bernard B. Fall and with several missionaries just returned from touring the Montagnard area.

²Sources for this portion of Chapter 1 are principally Joseph Buttinger, Bernard B. Fall, Wesley R. Fishel, George L. Harris, John J. Holland, Richard W. Lindholm, Frederick H. Stires, Howard Sochurek, Frederick Wickert, Roswell B. Wing *et al.* (for full citations, see bibliography), U.S. Army Special Forces after-action and other reports, and State Department communications and memoranda, supplemented by interviews with U.S. Army officers, State Department representatives, missionaries, and other observers.

³Telegram, U.S. Embassy, Saigon, to U.S. Secretary of State, August 2, 1965. CONFIDENTIAL.

⁴Lamar M. Prosser to Samuel V. Wilson, Memorandum. "Conversation with Province Chief, Darlac Province, Ban Me Thuot, October 6, 1964." CONFIDENTIAL.

⁵From interviews with selected Controlled American Sources (CAS) and U.S. military personnel during June 1964.

⁶Col. John H. Spears, Commander's Debriefing Letter (C) (Vietnam: Headquarters, 5th Special Forces Group [Airborne], 1st Special Forces), p. 5. CONFIDENTIAL NOFORN.

⁷Summarized from interviews with U.S. military and civilian observers and from Embassy SAIGON to Department of State, Airgram A-298, Subject: Provincial Reporting—The Montagnard Rebellion in Darlac and Quang Duc Provinces, October 16, 1964. SECRET.

⁸Lamar Prosser, Memorandum for Record. Subject: Conversation with Control Ya Ba, Directorate of Montagnard Affairs. USOM, Saigon, January 1965. Supplemented by author interviews with U.S. military officers and U.S. missionaries.

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² Walt Lundy, Memorandum to the Files. Subject: Special Forces on the Khmer Serai and KKK. Saigon: U.S. Embassy, July 5, 1965 (CONFIDENTIAL), supplemented by interviews with U.S. military personnel. For the Hoa Hao, see Chapter 4.

³ Lundy Memorandum, op. cit., and interviews with U.S. military personnel.

⁴ Interviews with U.S. military and diplomatic personnel.

⁵ Interviews with U.S. military personnel.

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² Holland, John J. (Capt.), A Study of the Hoa Hao Religious Sect (C) (CONFIDENTIAL NO-FORN) (APO 96243) San Francisco, Calif.: Headquarters, 5th Special Forces (Airborne), 1st Special Forces Tactical Operations Center, April 21, 1965, pp. 9-10.

³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴ Gerald C. Hickey, Village in Vietnam. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964, p. 291.

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